THE BEST OF WIZARD® BASIC TRAINING

# HOW TO DRAW

volume I

OVER 250 PAGES BY

JIM LEE
MICHAEL TURNER
GEORGE PÉREZ
JOE KUBERT
& MORE!

INTRODUCTION BY **JOE QUESADA**

DOUBLE PAGE SPREAD: CUT AS SHOWN, ABUT PAGE EDGES, TAPE ON BACK. **DO NOT** OVERLAP.

# HOW TO DRAW

## THE BEST OF BASIC TRAINING

## volume I

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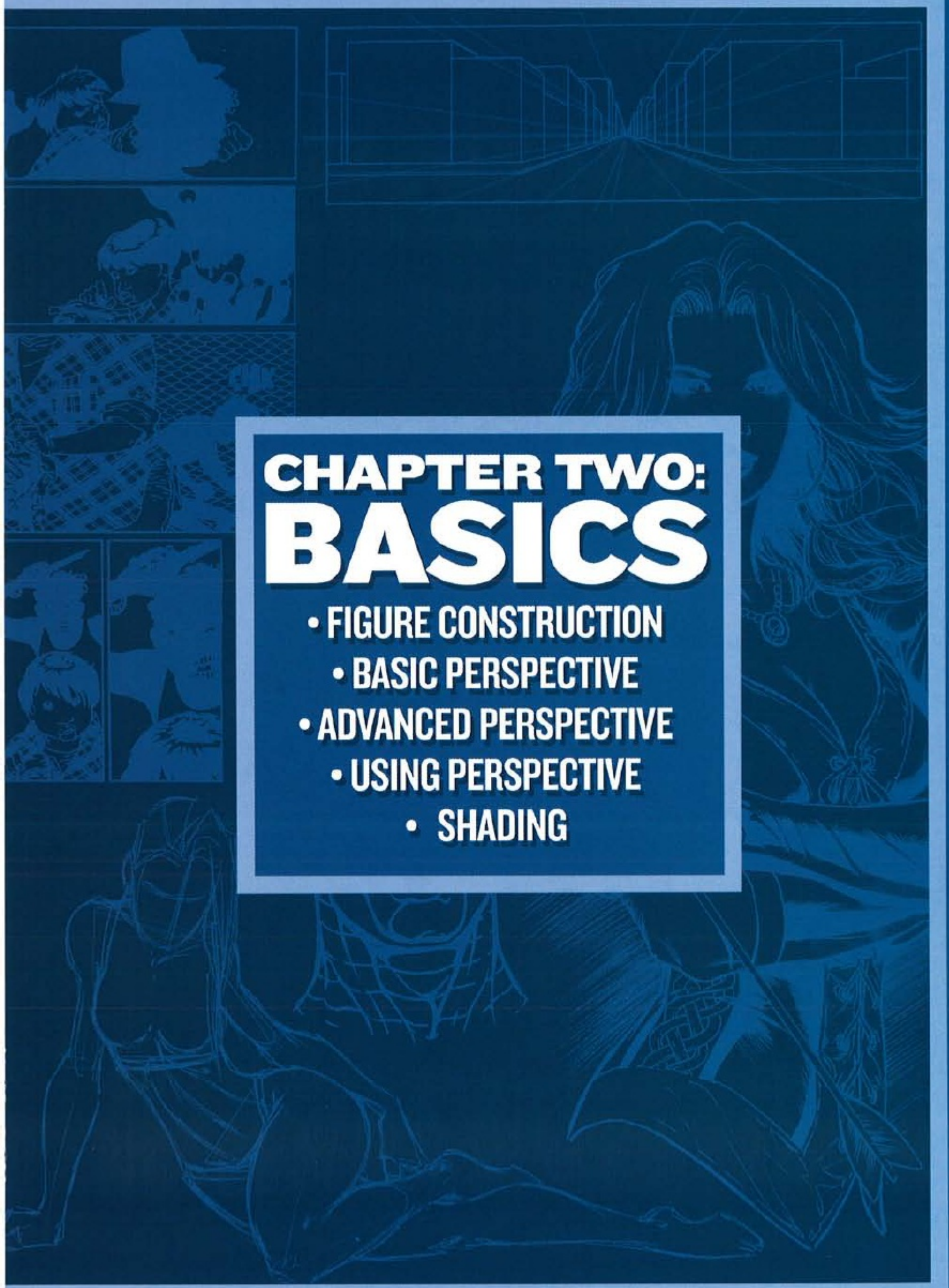


# CHAPTER TWO: BASICS

- FIGURE CONSTRUCTION
- BASIC PERSPECTIVE
- ADVANCED PERSPECTIVE
- USING PERSPECTIVE
- SHADING

# FIGURE CONSTRUCTION

BY JIM CALAFIORE

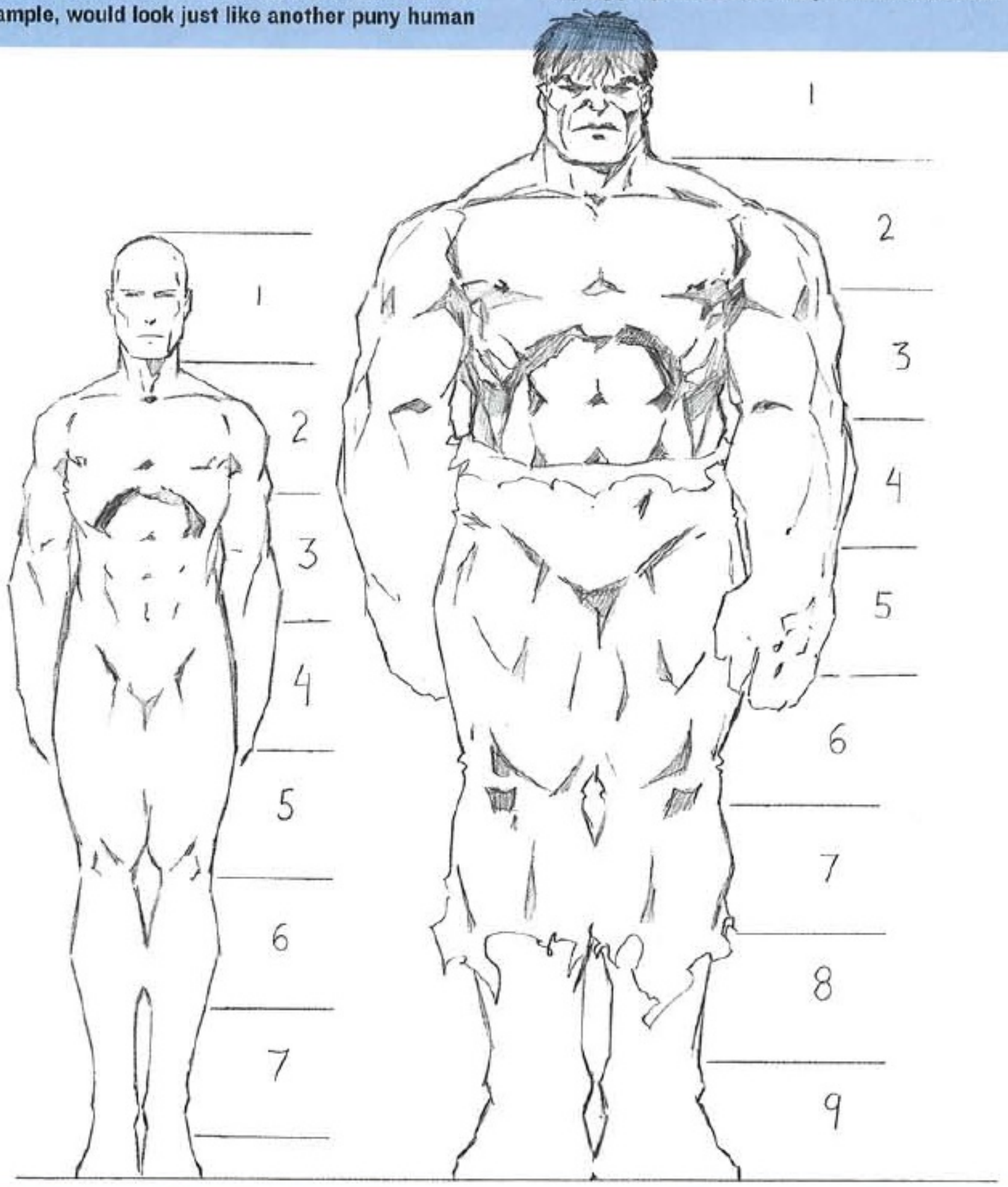
Methods of figure construction can be as specific to an artist as his style. It's a matter of finding a comfortable process that is also somewhat time efficient (especially when working on a monthly title). This is how I do it from scratch.

Before we begin: This is not an anatomy lesson. There's not enough room to even begin to explain that subject. I strongly recommend that you find some books on human anatomy and figure drawing. And if any schools or studios in your area offer life-drawing classes, sign up for them. Why? Because we have to grasp the basics. We need to understand structure before we can distort it.

## PROPORTIONAL RESPONSE

Using the height of a human head as a unit of measure, the average person is between seven and eight heads tall, give or take. But we're not drawing real people. We've all seen a wide variety of body proportions in comic books, depending on the artist; everything from realistically rendered to pin-headed behemoths. It's up to you to decide which approach works best for you, but there are times when reality just won't do. The Hulk, for example, would look just like another puny human in real-world proportions, no matter how bulging the muscles. It's the larger size of his body compared to his head that gives him his great bulk. (He should also be drawn larger overall, and I'll usually enlarge his hands and feet even more.) Thor just wouldn't look right if his shoulders weren't two times wider than they should be.

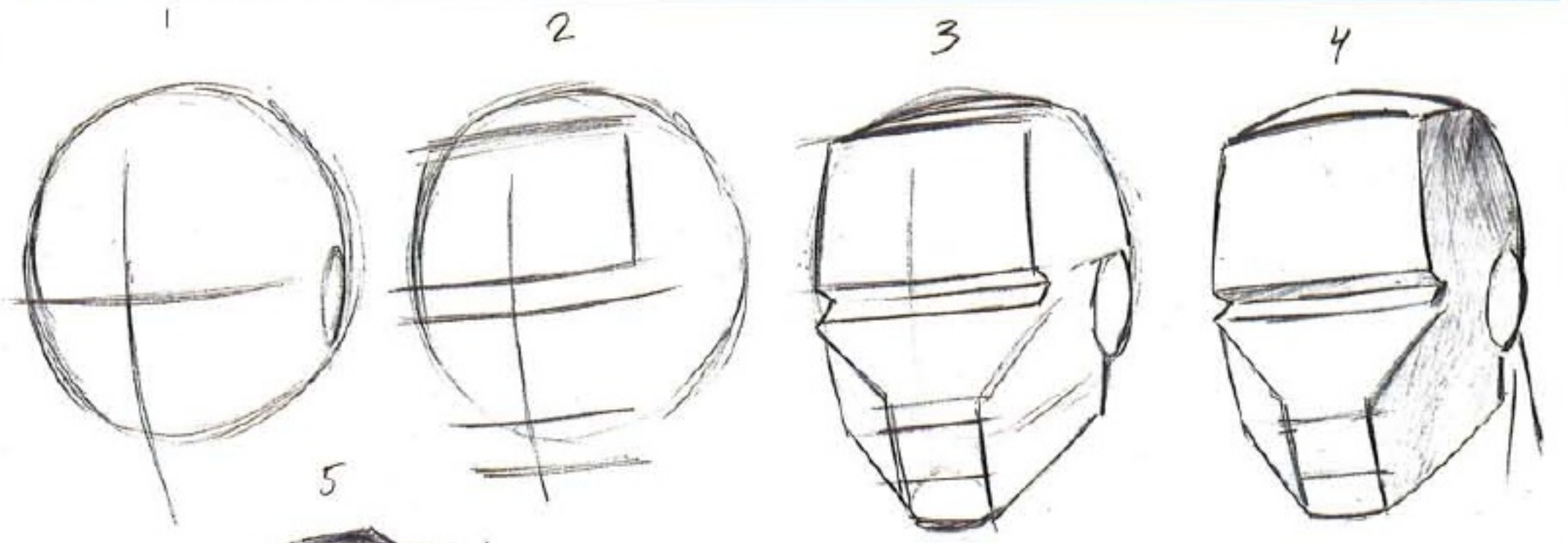
Varying proportions can help create character.




MARVEL, HULK, WOLVERINE ™ & © 2005 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

# BLOCKHEADS

When drawing a figure, I usually start with the head. I find it easier to "drop" the body off the neck than trying to position the head on an already sketched-out body. The diagram below shows four steps to how I handle basic head construction:



As you can see, I'm laying out basic planes of the face, just in an extremely simplified form. (With the fourth example you can see how this approach helps in finding shadows.) This is the basic shell I use for most of the heads I draw, and I simply adjust the structure to fit the character as I rough it in. In the figure to the left, you can see how I've drawn a more detailed head from the simplified beginning.

# WITHATWIST

When first working out a particular pose, I start by drawing little stick figures. Unless a character is at complete, standing rest, I usually try to twist the body, even if only a little bit. Like a spring, it adds tension to a pose.

In **Figure A**, I've drawn horizontal lines through the head, shoulders and hips—the three major independent parts of the body. At standing rest, these lines are parallel. In the next figure, you can see the rotations of each line as I "twisted" the figure.

Be careful. You can only twist so far before it starts to look weird. One major part of the body can rarely turn perpendicular to the part above or below it. Try it. Turn just your head, and you'll see that your chin can't get all the way to your shoulder... at least not without severe pain and a trip to the chiropractor. The same is true for your torso and hips.

Sometimes I'll even draw the "twist" lines first just to see how the tension reads.

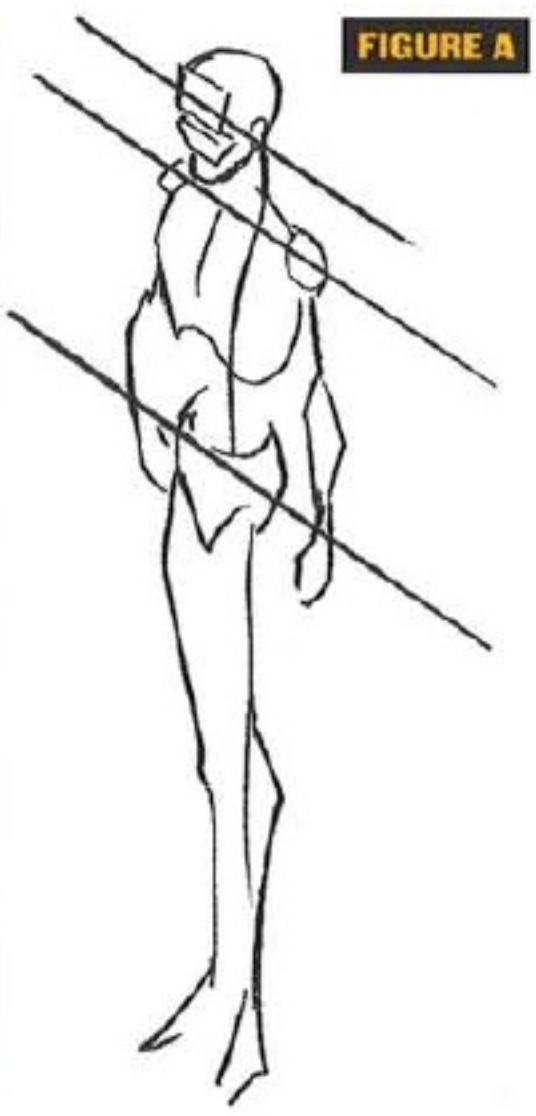


FIGURE A

# FIGURECONSTRUCTION

## BAREBONES

Moving to full size in **Figure B**, I seem to be starting over with another stick figure. This time, however, I'm working with the "sticks" of the human skeleton. (Well, just a few of them, and greatly simplified.) It helps to work out various lengths, and to visualize the joints.

You'll notice the heavy line indicating the spine. In this stage, I find it helpful to lay in the spine after the head; it helps keep things in line so I don't get the head, torso or hips way out of position. From the spine, I hang an oval ribcage and a rough pelvic shape. The limbs flow naturally from these.

Note that I've included the "twist" lines through the head, torso and pelvis to help orient the figure again.

FIGURE B

## ROUGHLYSPEAKING

In this figure, I rough in the basic body forms—chest, trunk, arms, legs, etc. I'm still not being too specific here, just trying to get the proportions feeling right. I use simple ovals, tubes and blocks to build the figure. A knowledge of anatomy is helpful with the mass of the limbs and such. You'll also note that in some places, like the chest, I've started delineating specific planes like I did with the "block heads."

## PRO TIPS

### LIVE ACTION

"Draw from life, till you get used to it—windowpanes, doors, telephones, everything. If you can make the backgrounds convincing, the figures you draw will be more believable." —John Romita Sr., *Amazing Spider-Man*

## PUMPITUP

Then I go back and put in specific muscle groups (**Figure C**). Again, I can't go into any extensive discussion of anatomy, so I'm suggesting you look at reference books. I find body-builder magazines very useful, since the muscles are so well delineated on the bodies, and the way they thread together is distinct. Muscles don't sit independent of each other; they intertwine, giving it that "chorded" look.

Eventually you develop your own shorthand for rendering muscles.

**FIGURE C**

## ANDTHEN...

Add the costume, and the miscellaneous hoo-ha, and we're done. Now you might say that the figure in the "Roughly Speaking" section didn't look like it was going to be Wolverine. It was too thin!

That's the point. The basics of figure construction work the same for an average person as they do for a muscle-bound shrimp with metal toothpicks stuck in his hands.

...He didn't hear me say that, did he?

Oh.

Um, gotta go. 'Bye.

---

***Jim Calafiore's** fine craftsmanship has improved the pages of many comic books, including DC's* Aquaman *and Marvel's* Exiles.

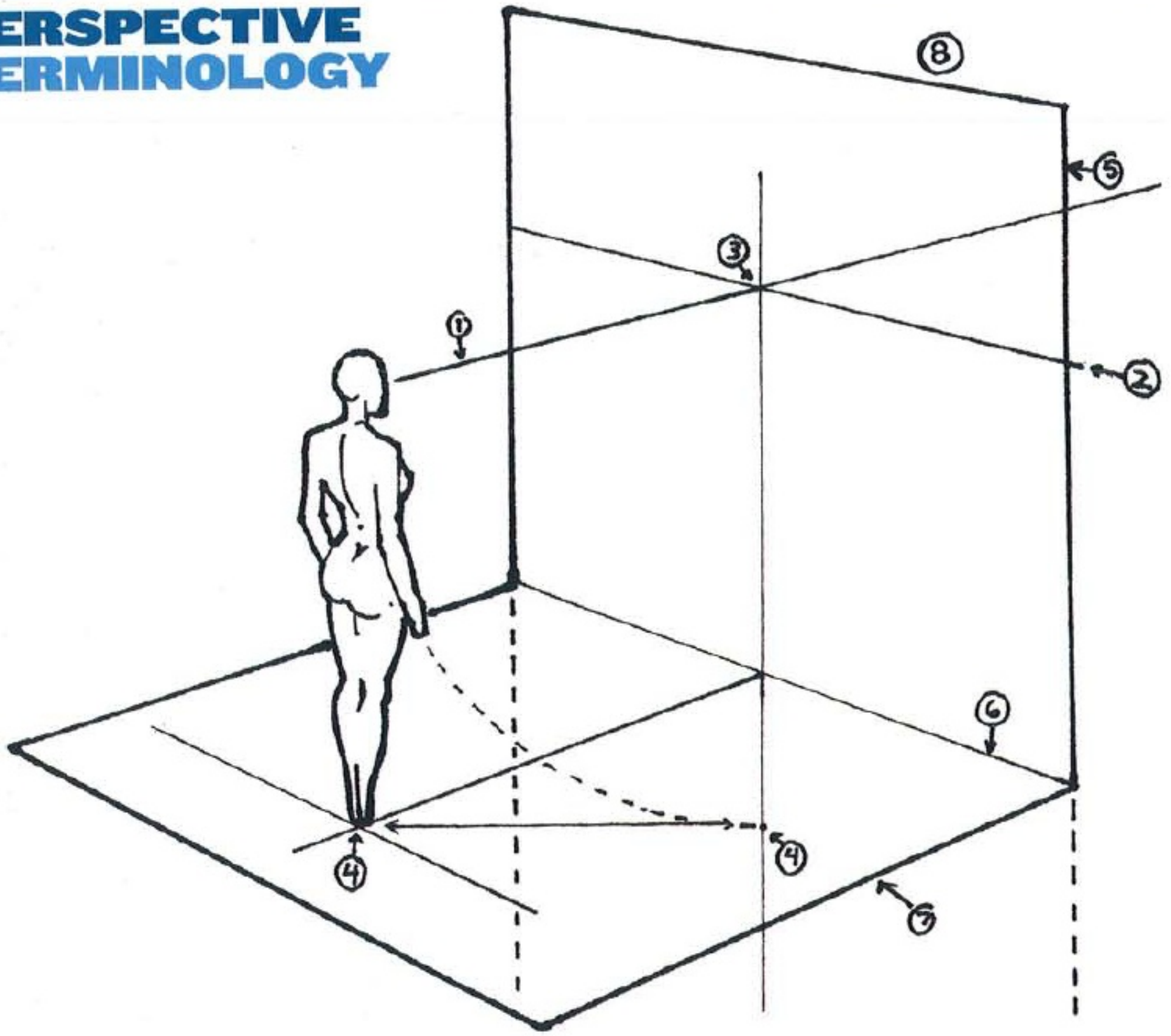
# BASIC PERSPECTIVE

BY BART SEARS

Greetings and salutations! Much of what I know of perspective was gleaned from many sources at many different times in my life. One such source I've discovered is a book which I have found to be the best single source of perspective drawing: ***On the Spot Guides: Perspective Drawing*** by Mark Way (published in 1989 by Outline Press, London, England). Anything you want to know is in it, explained in relatively simple terms, clearly illustrated. It's a veritable treasure chest of perspective knowledge.

According to my *Webster's Dictionary*, "perspective" is "1. The art of depicting objects on a plane so as to show three dimensions and indicate distance away from the observer; 2. Proportion, interrelation, scale; 3. Appearance in terms of distance." I don't think I could have said it better myself.

## PERSPECTIVE TERMINOLOGY




1. **Line of sight:** An imaginary line traveling straight out from the viewer's eyes to infinity.
2. **Horizon line:** A line drawn horizontally across the picture plane at the point of intersection with the line of sight.
3. **Vanishing point:** The point at which receding parallel lines appear to converge at the horizon line.
4. **Standing point:** The point on the ground plane where the spectator is standing.
5. **Picture plane:** An imaginary vertical plane through which the spectator is viewing the scene. Each panel in a comic book would be considered to have been drawn on this imaginary plane.
6. **Ground line:** A horizontal line drawn to represent the intersection of the picture plane and the ground plane.
7. **Ground plane:** The horizontal plane on which the viewer is standing; does not have to be the ground plane of the picture.
8. **One-point perspective:** The simplest form of drawn perspective (diagram above) in that all receding parallel lines converge at only one vanishing point.

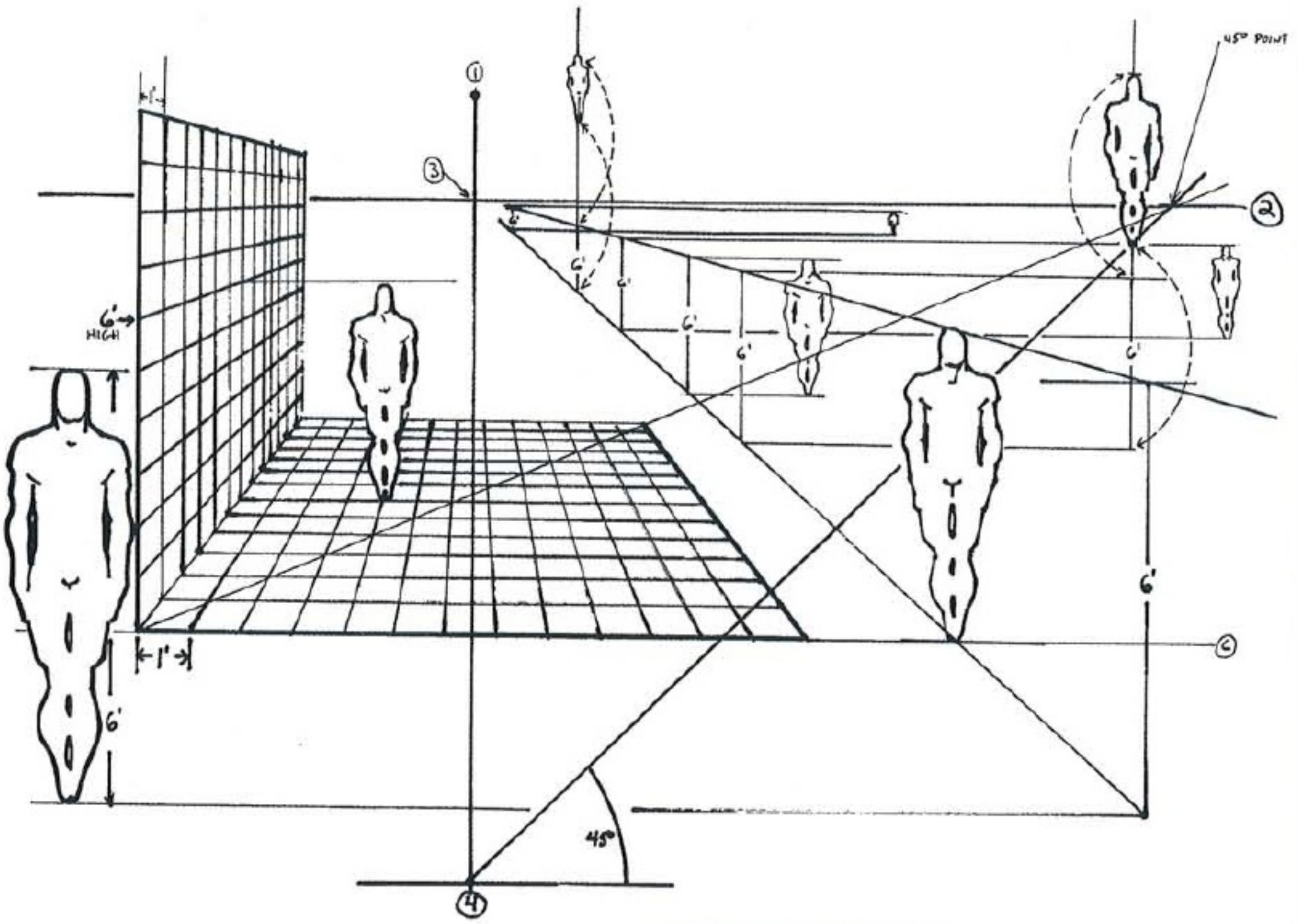
PHOTO: PAUL SCHIRALDI

# CONVERGENCE AND FORESHORTENING

The principle of convergence states that when object with parallel sides are seen in perspective, parallel lines receding from the viewer appear to meet at the horizon line (no convergence).

These receding lines are known as vanishing lines, and the point at which they converge is known as the vanishing point.

When objects of equal size recede into the distance, they appear to get smaller the farther they are from the viewer. This is known as foreshortening. When the amount of perspective is slight, the foreshortening is gradual and barely noticed; when the perspective is severe, the foreshortening is dramatic and powerful.




# ONE-POINT PERSPECTIVE

I've constructed a one-point perspective grid above. Note how the standing point from the previous page translated to an actual drawing. Notice the 15-degree line drawn from the standing point to the horizon line and pay attention to how this vanishing point was used to help construct the floor and wall grids. Note also how the series of six-foot tall figures were determined by locating balance points and following the vanishing lines from the top of the head to the vertical lines drawn up through the balance points. There is a lot going on here and not much space to teach it. Study it and figure out the best that you can.

## PRO TIPS

### STYLE GUIDE

"Overly stylized art might make you an interesting fad, but you run the risk of becoming yesterday's news and losing out on a long-term future in comics." —Ethan Van Sciver, *Green Lantern: Rebirth*

**THERE YOU HAVE** our first real look at perspective, a real barebones kind of look as well. I know that a lot of this might not make a whole lot of sense to start, but keep trying and keep drawing. There's just so much to drawing, and this is really a pretty small forum, but hang in there and, eventually, we'll get it all covered.

*Bart Sears, artist on comics like Marvel's* Sabretooth *and DC's* Justice League Europe, *thinks you should have a unique perspective on life, then draw it.*

# ADVANCED PERSPECTIVE

BY JIM CALAFIORE

Jim Calafiore here again. I've often stated in tutorials like these that my techniques aren't the only way to go, but this one's a bit different. When it comes to accurately representing foreshortened objects and creating the illusion of depth, you must know perspective.

Having said that, I'll also say that there's no way I can possibly cover all the subtleties of perspective...even in this lesson or the next one, "Using Perspective," on page 22. As with any technique you're interested in, I suggest looking for a book on the subject at a store or your local library. Now let's get to it!

## THE VANISHER

We'll start with one-point perspective (**Figures A & B**). Yep, it's exactly what it sounds like: perspective lines originate from a single point, called a vanishing point, which sits on what's called the horizon line. If an object is oriented to a plane—such as the Earth—then that line is the actual horizon. But it doesn't have to be. This line can also be called the eye line. Whichever you call it, the line runs parallel to the camera.

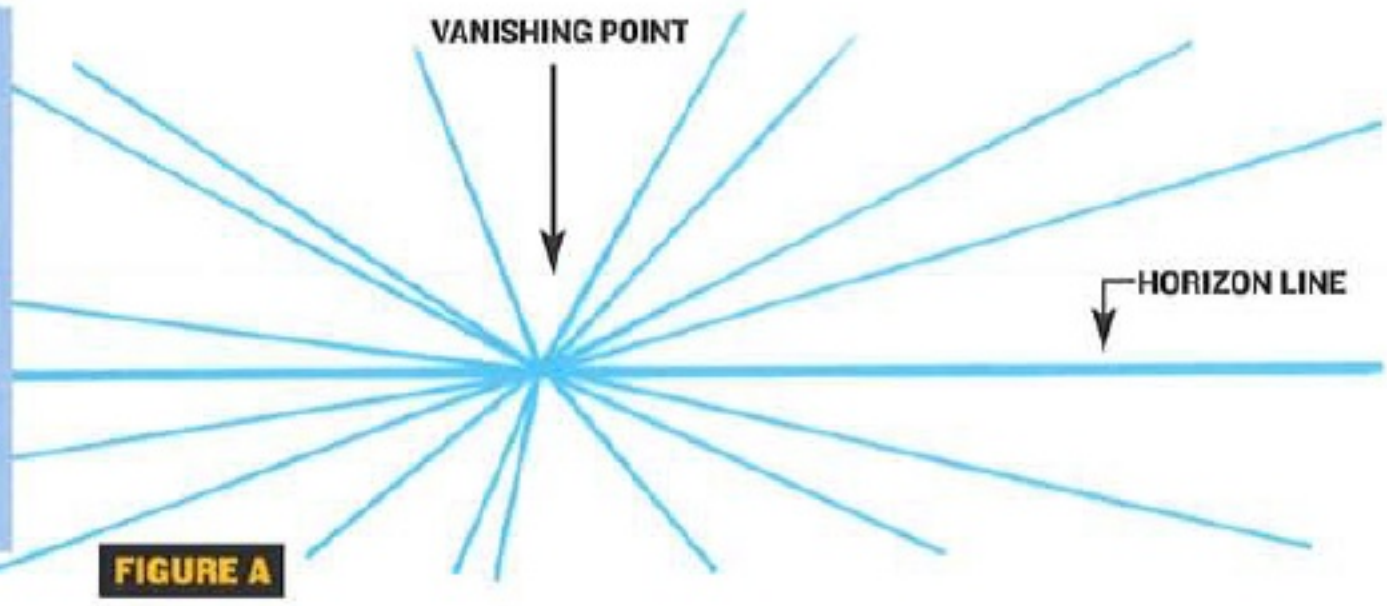



FIGURE A

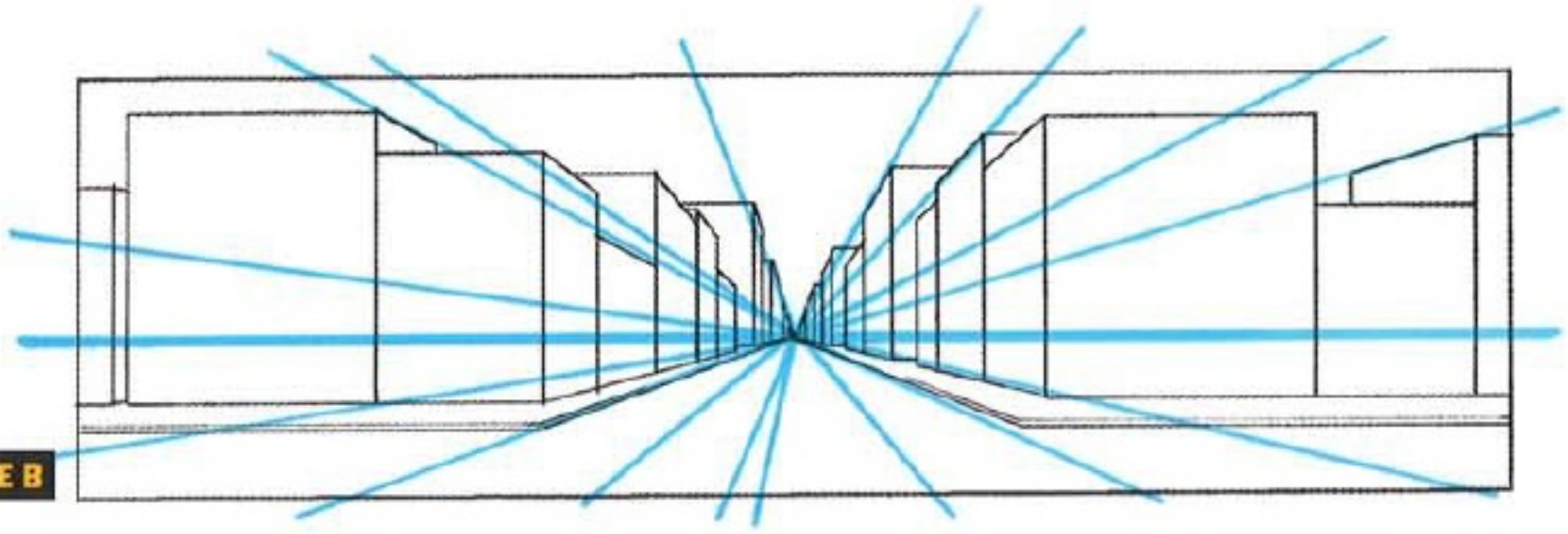


FIGURE B

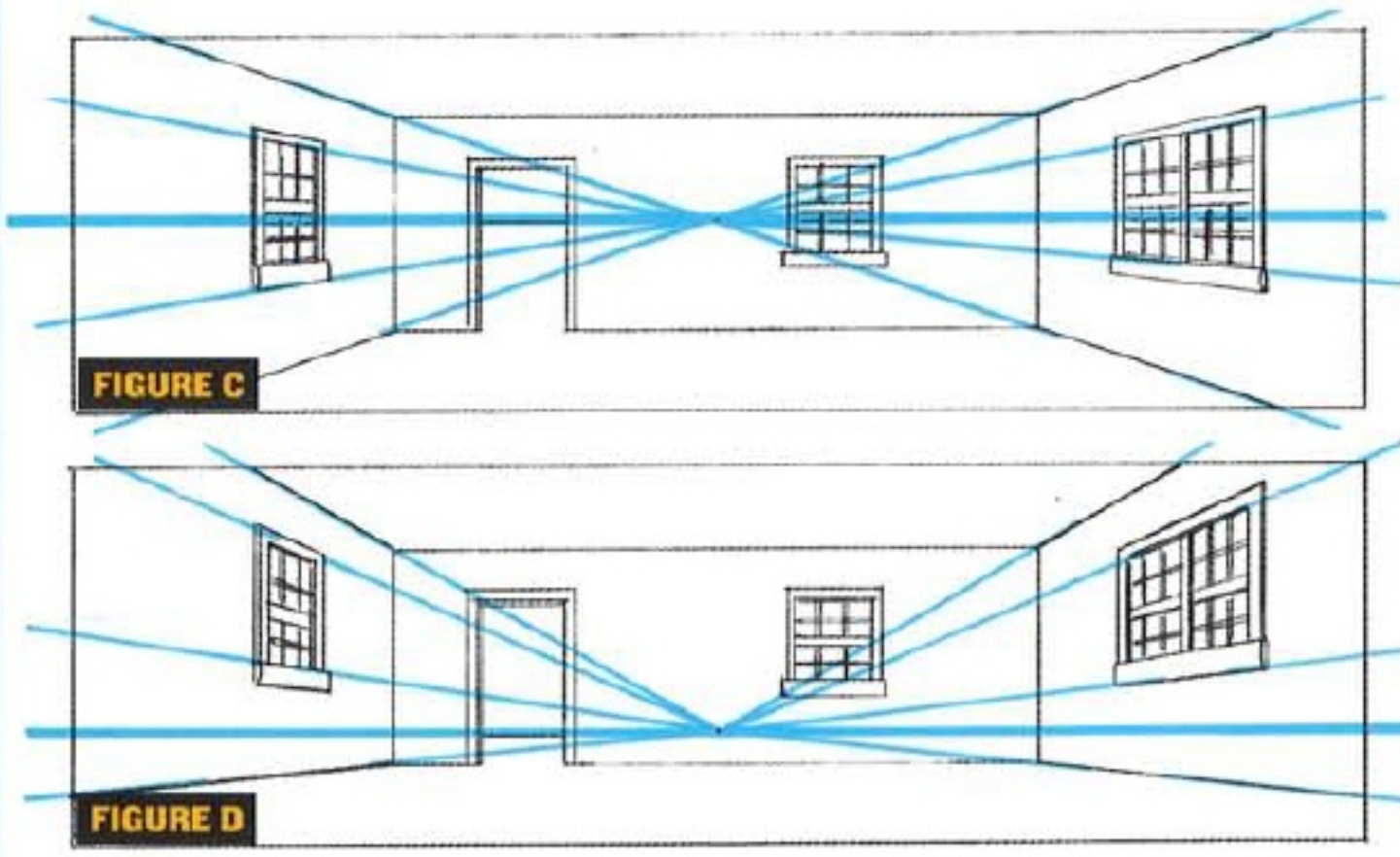


FIGURE C

FIGURE D

## CHILD'S PLAY

One-point perspective deals with the foreshortening of one dimension. In **Figure C**, the depth of the room is oriented to the vanishing point. The other two dimensions, height and width, remain parallel to the camera plane.

Perspective can be manipulated to change the feel and mood of the room by altering the camera angle. In **Figure D**, we've lowered the camera to a child's level. Notice how the horizon line hasn't changed, only our relation to it has.

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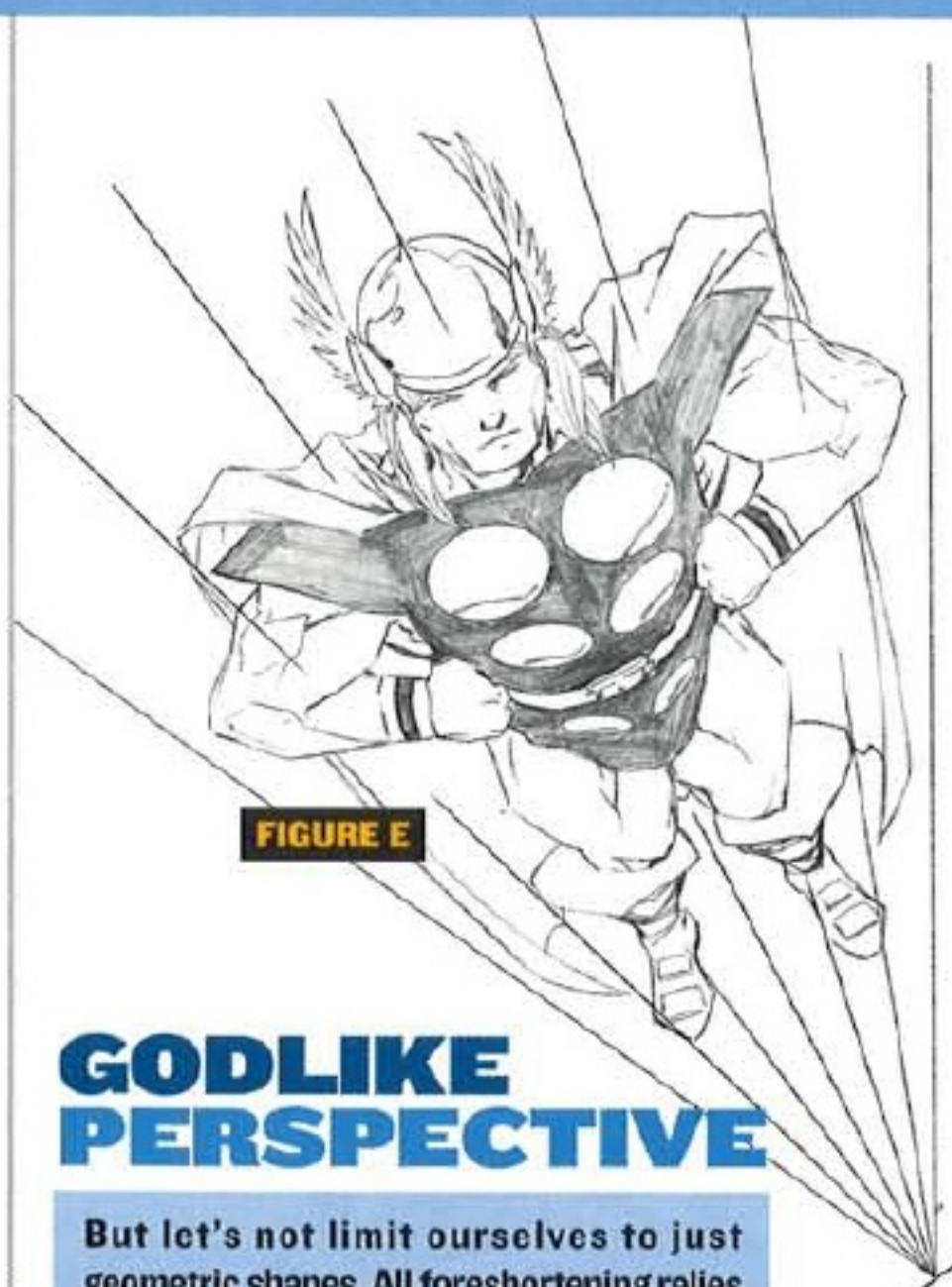


FIGURE E

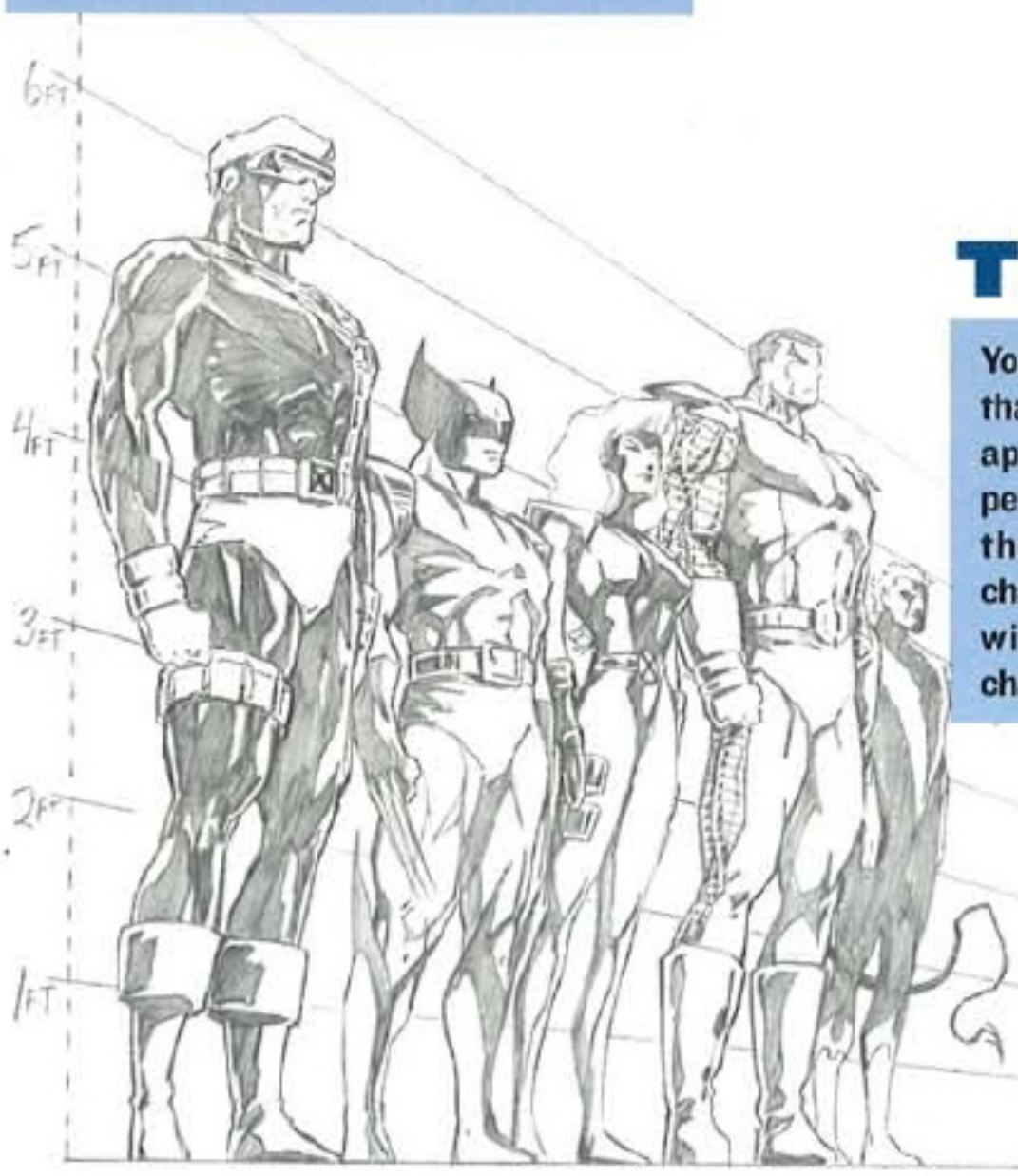
FIGURE G



FIGURE F

## GODLIKE PERSPECTIVE

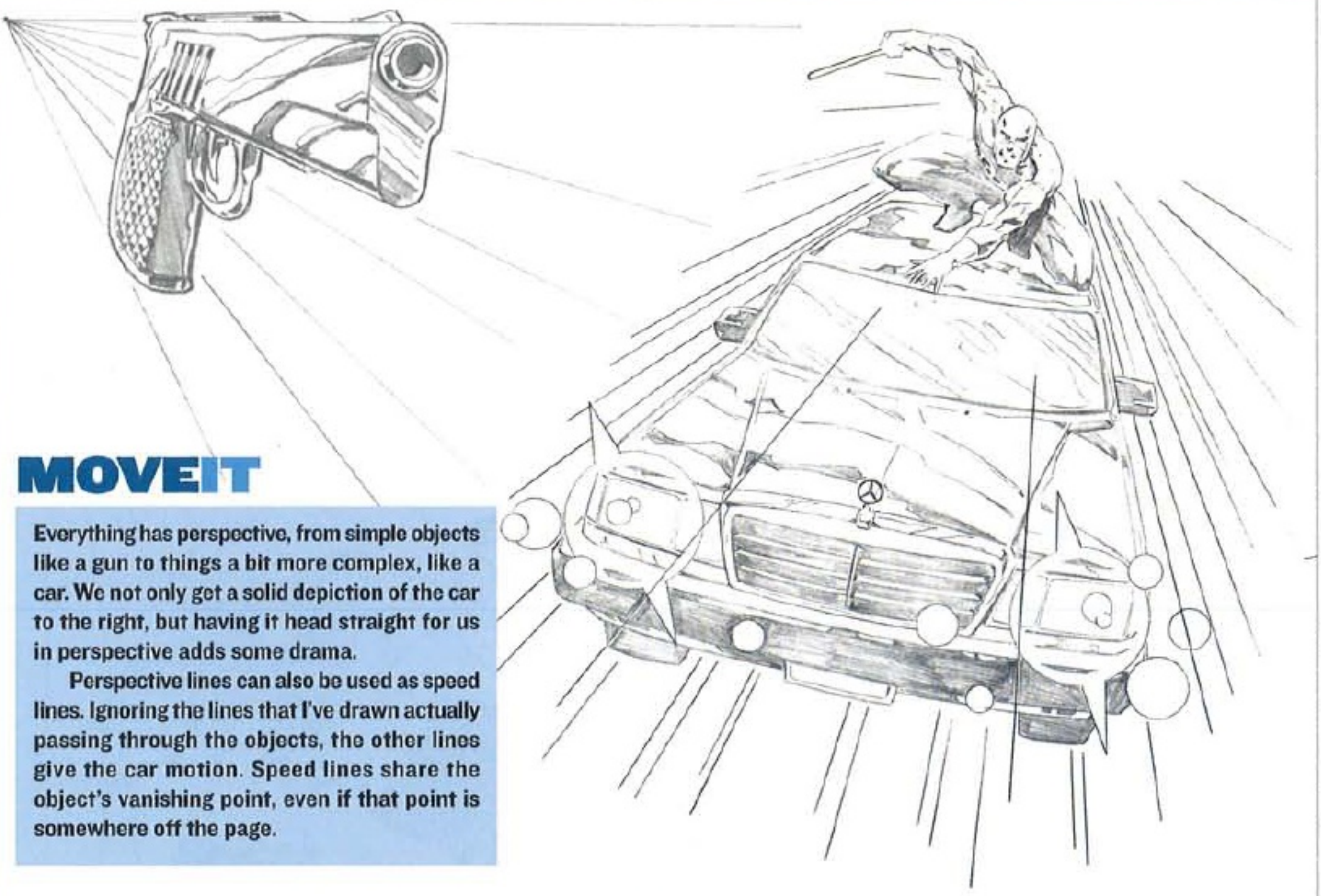
But let's not limit ourselves to just geometric shapes. All foreshortening relies on perspective, especially organic shapes. Here are two very extreme-angle shots of Thor **(Figures E & F)**. The third, smaller figure in the center is our guide **(Figure G)**. The lines bisecting it tell us what we know about the relative position of the various body parts: the width of his shoulders compared to the set of his feet, the fall of his cape in relation to his feet and elbows, etc. Translating this to the lines of one-point perspective, we should get an accurate foreshortening of the figure.




## THEUSUALSUSPECTS

You can also rely on perspective to maintain size ratios. We all know that Cyclops is shorter than Colossus, but since he's closer to us, he appears bigger in this line-up of familiar figures. Follow the perspective line and you'll see Cyclops' head hits Colossus at about the shoulder. Besides keeping the respective heights of characters consistent, perspective will keep characters consistent with their surroundings. In a street scene, it can prevent a character from being taller than a lamppost.

# ADVANCED PERSPECTIVE



## MOVE IT

Everything has perspective, from simple objects like a gun to things a bit more complex, like a car. We not only get a solid depiction of the car to the right, but having it head straight for us in perspective adds some drama.

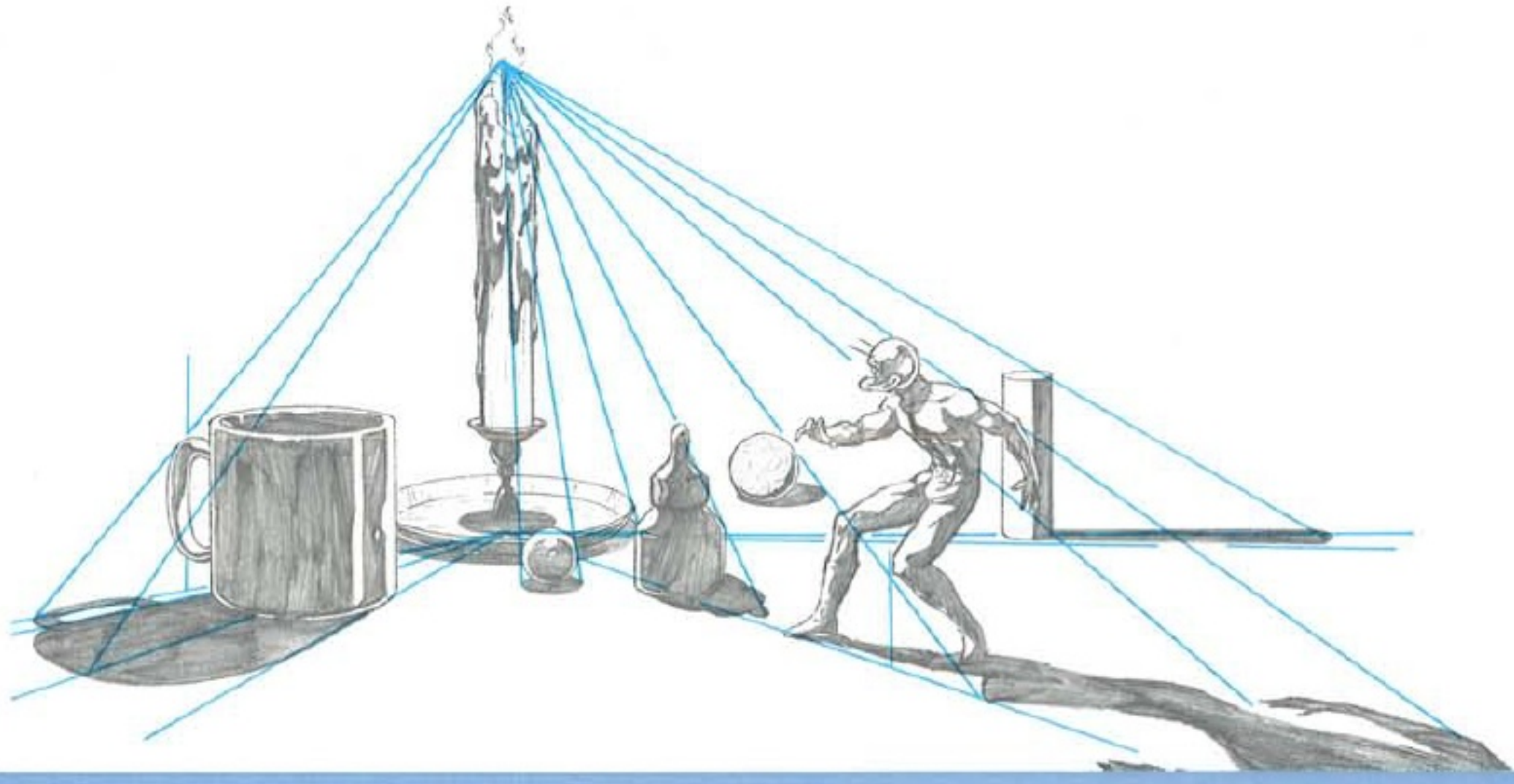
Perspective lines can also be used as speed lines. Ignoring the lines that I've drawn actually passing through the objects, the other lines give the car motion. Speed lines share the object's vanishing point, even if that point is somewhere off the page.

## THE SHADOW KNOWS

There's a use for perspective that doesn't involve foreshortening at all. When dealing with a light source in close proximity to objects (something like the sun is too far away), you can use that source as the vanishing point to help you place shadows.

I'm actually using two points in the illustration below, one in the light source and one directly below it on the ground. The intersections of the lines radiating out toward and through an object give us the position of the object's shadow. (With objects or parts of objects that are off the ground, you have to drop a vertical line to judge its point above the ground, as I've done with Ant-Man's knee and the mug handle.)

Now, this isn't two-point perspective, and you don't have to worry about horizon lines. We're not using perspective the same way as in the other examples; we're just using the technique to help with the shadows.



# THEMONEYSHOT

Finally, here's an illustration where the perspective plays an integral part. The background of industrial pipes is rendered in one-point perspective. (Note that the vanishing point doesn't have to be the dead center of a scene; here it's to the lower left. And although the pipes not in perspective are drawn diagonally, you can see that they are still parallel to the plane of the camera.) Not only does the perspective create depth and drama, but I've also used the pipes in place of speed lines, reinforcing Juggy's motion without adding an element that isn't really there.

**AND THAT ABOUT DOES IT.**

I hope you...wait! What about two-point and three-point perspective? Well, you'll just have to turn the page and find out. See ya there!

## CHAPTER TWO: PART 4

# USING PERSPECTIVE

BY JIM CALAFIORE

Well, now that we've beaten one-point perspective into submission, we're ready to tackle two- and three-point perspective. In one sense, as long as we've (hopefully) given you a basic understanding of one-point perspective, the rest is almost just matter of adding additional perspective. We won't be altering the concepts here at all, just how we apply them.

In another sense, however, it's nowhere near that simple. Two- and three- point perspective present unique problems, but when executed well, the results make all the difference between an average piece and a great piece.

But I'm wasting space, so let's just get to it...

## POINTITOUT

Where one-point perspective deals with the foreshortening of one dimension of an object, two-point perspective deals with (You guessed it!) the foreshortening of two dimensions. As with any perspective, we have a horizon line (or eye line) running parallel to the camera plane. This time, since we're "describing" two dimensions in perspective, we have two separate vanishing points on the horizon which radiate lines of perspective that intersect (**Figure A**). Roughing in the primary shapes in a drawing will help locate the vanishing points that will generate the rest of the objects in the scene.

In **Figure B**, we're facing the corner of our simplified buildings. Neither the depth nor the width are parallel to the camera plane (only the height is), so we show them foreshortened.

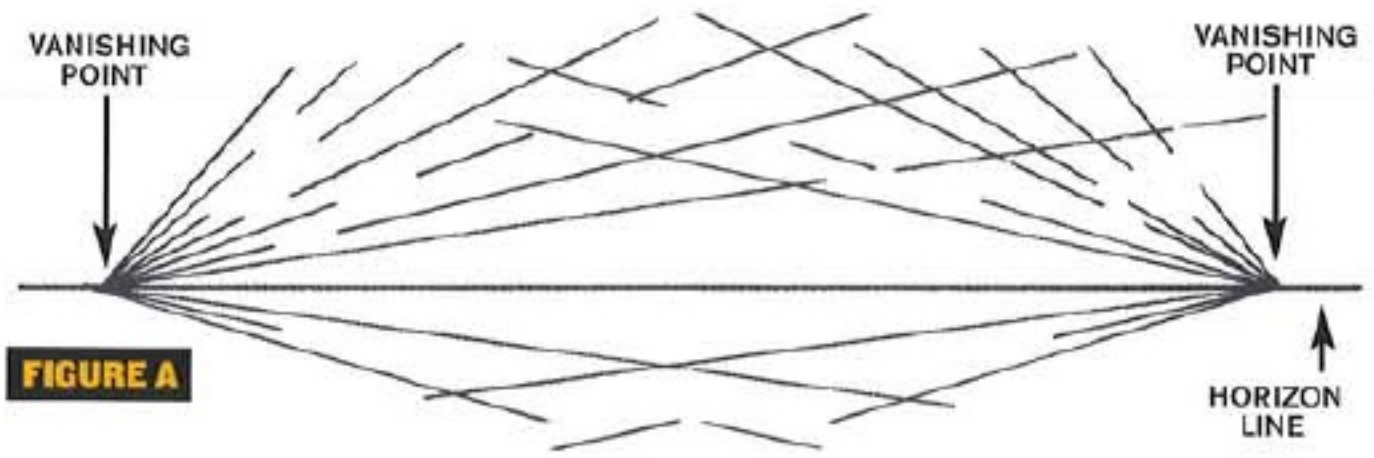



FIGURE A

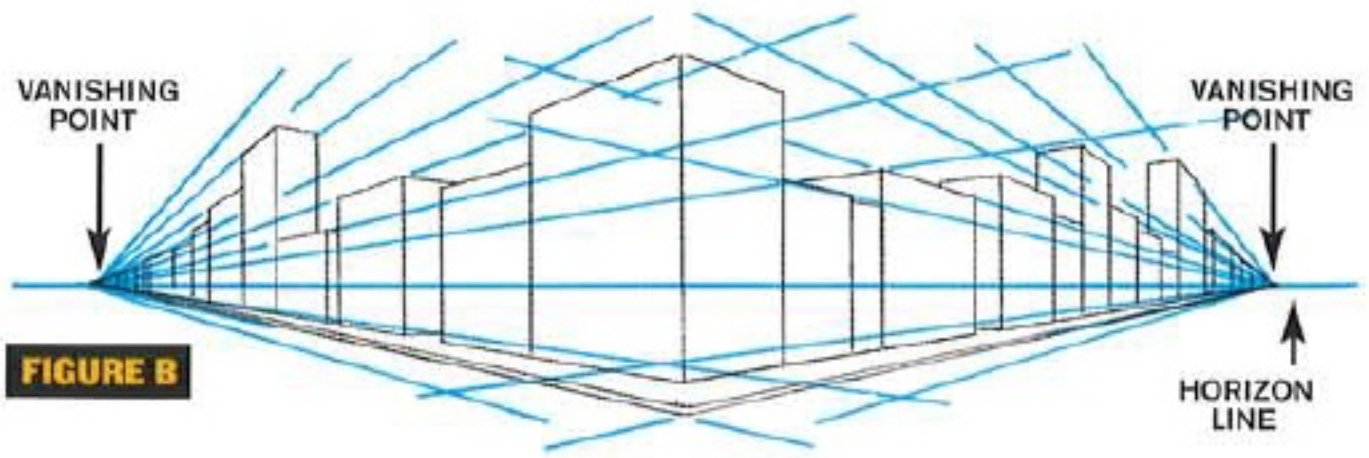



FIGURE B

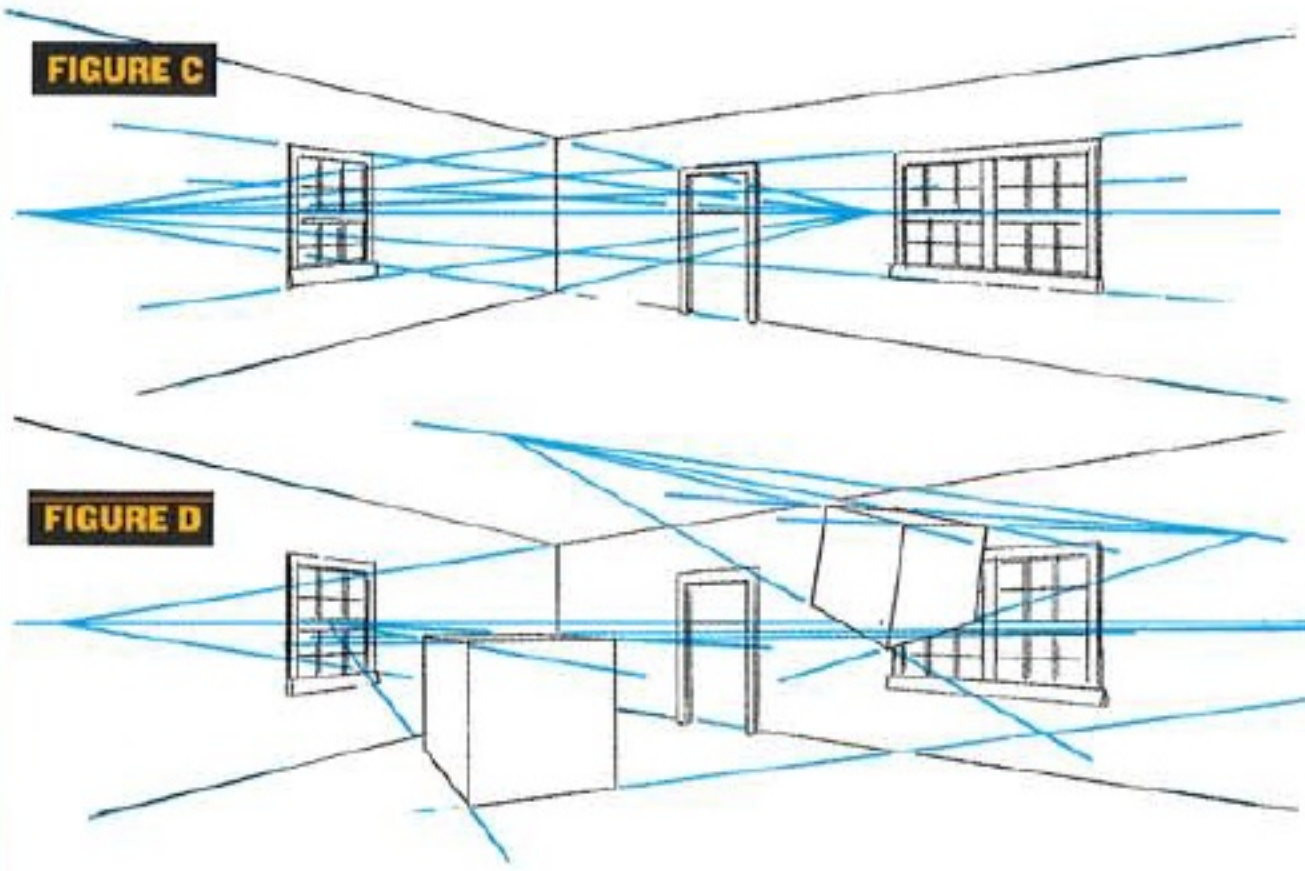


FIGURE C



FIGURE D

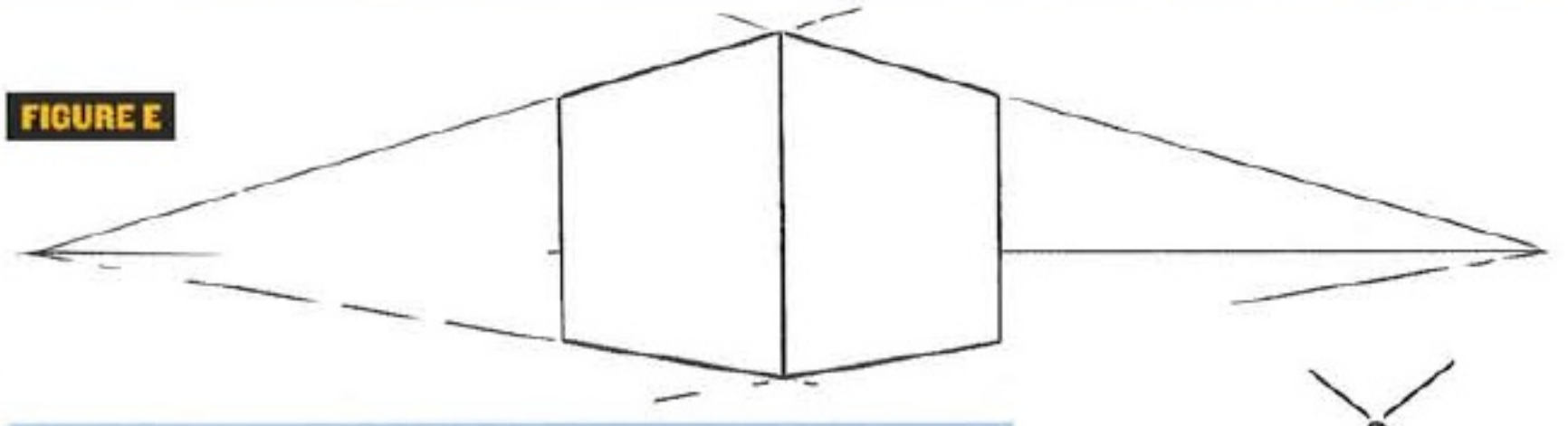
## HOUSEPARTY

And here's our room interior, similarly aligned (**Figure C**). Note that with interiors—unless you're deliberately distorting reality—only two walls of a rectangular room are visible in two-point perspective. In **Figure D**, I've added a couple of objects to the room that have their own perspective. The cube on the floor is oriented to the room's horizon line, but rotated so that its depth and width demand their own vanishing points. The floating cube's position requires points on its own horizon line, this time an imaginary one.

Now, I haven't created any new rules here, I've just used two-point perspective more than once. With any perspective, multiple objects can require multiple horizon lines, depending on their orientation.

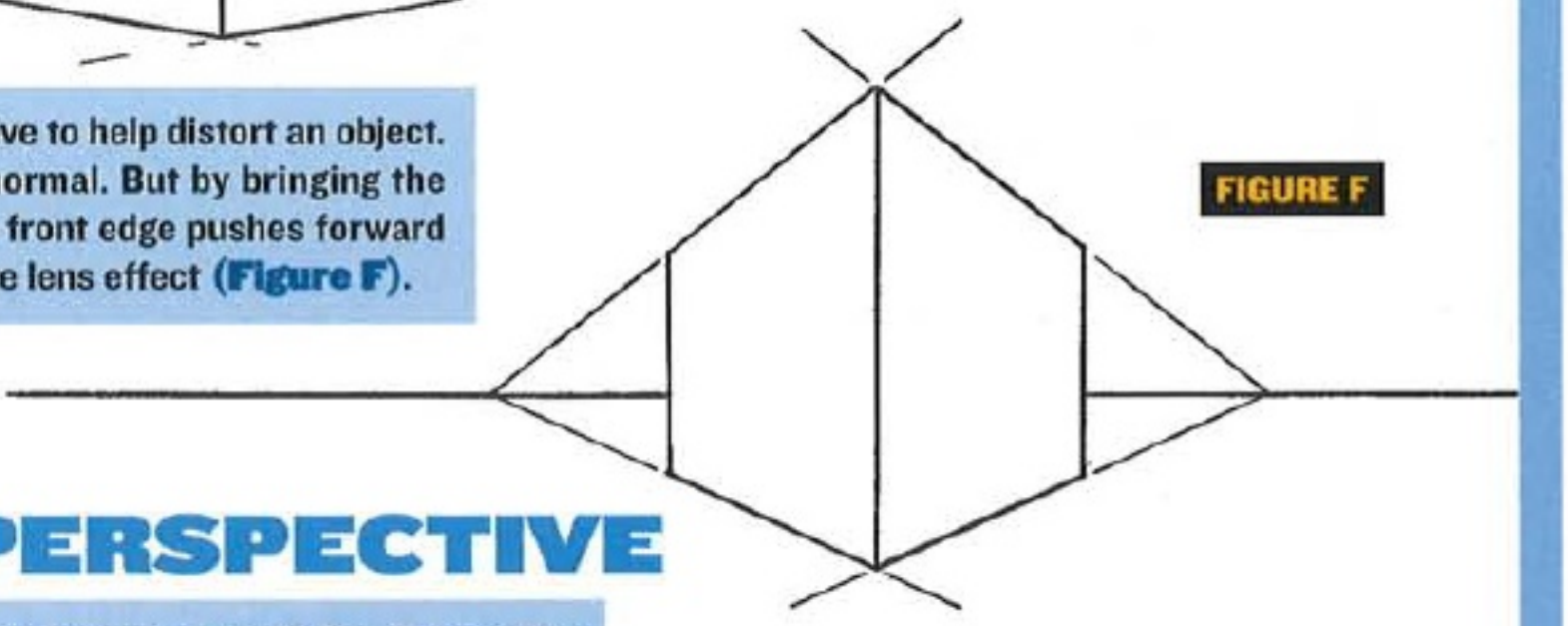
MARVEL, HUMAN TORCH, SPIDER-MAN™ & © 2005 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

FIGURE E



You can also use two-point perspective to help distort an object. The cube in **Figure E** looks quite normal. But by bringing the vanishing points closer together, the front edge pushes forward unnaturally, giving the cube a fish-eye lens effect (**Figure F**).

FIGURE F



# FANTASTICPERSPECTIVE

Enough cubes already. Let's get into some fun stuff. You'll be using perspective mostly on geometric shapes, like buildings. You'll notice that in two-point, the perspective lines of the Fantastic Four's old home lead to vanishing points and a horizon line off the page. If this happens when you're working on a drawing, just add a few pieces of scrap paper to extend your drawing surface and discard the scraps when you're done.

# USINGPERSPECTIVE

## WORDPLAY

A quick note about terminology: Most texts on perspective tend to shy away from the terms "width," "depth" and "height," but I find it the simplest way to identify the three dimensions. I'm only talking about dimensions as they relate to the camera plane and the horizon line. When dealing strictly with perspective, I label the dimensions oriented to the horizon line "depth" and "width" and the dimension perpendicular to it the "height." If a building is lying on its side on the ground, what was once the "height" is now the "width." But if the horizon line is tilted vertically, I still label the dimension perpendicular to it the "height."

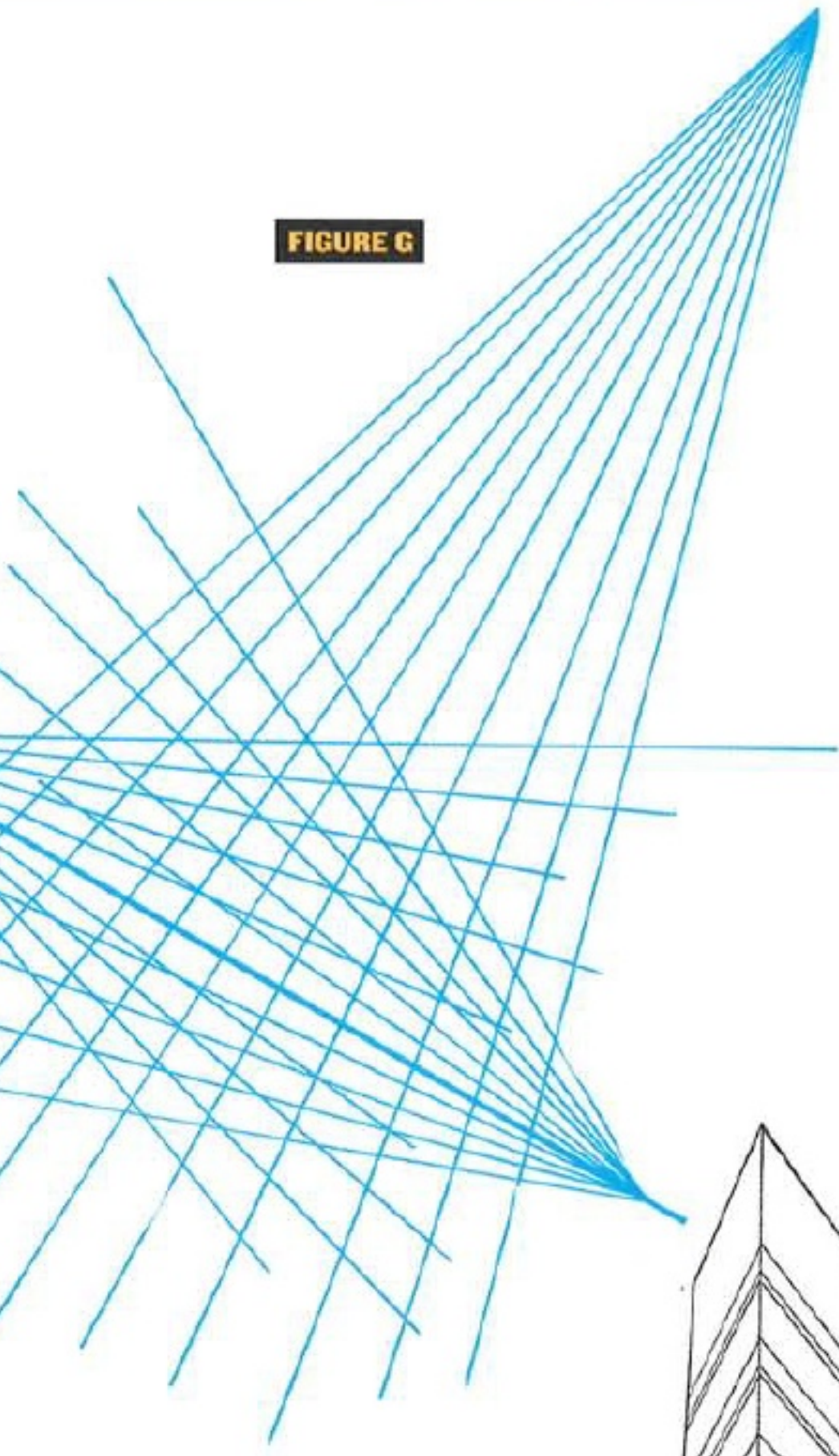


FIGURE G



FIGURE H



FIGURE I

## THREEPOINTS

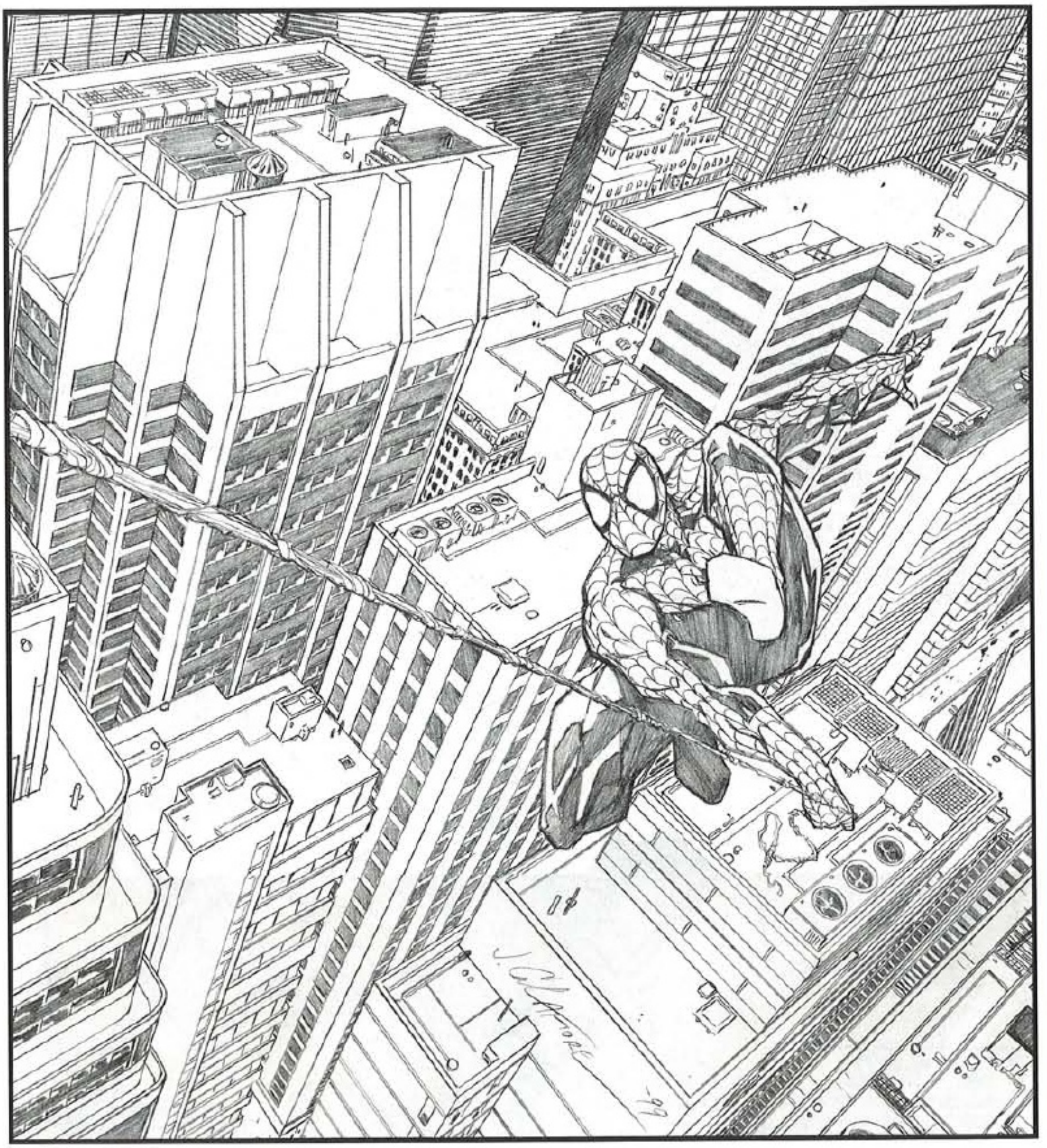
Okay. Feeling comfortable with two-point perspective? Good. Then let's move on to three-point perspective. Three-point perspective is required when no dimension of an object is parallel to the camera plane; so the height now demands foreshortening. The technique is a little different, since the third vanishing point is not on the horizon line, but at a point perpendicular to it (**Figure G**).

In **Figure H** we have a building in two-point perspective that looks distorted. In reality, the sides of a building so tall couldn't remain parallel to each other, and need three-point perspective to look right (**Figure I**).

# PRACTICALPERSPECTIVE

Finally, here's a practical application, as Spidey swings high above the city. A high-angle view of the Web-slinger as he does his thing always adds a ton of drama and scope. Often with three-point perspective, as seen here, all vanishing points fall outside the image area. (Of course, I could've just traced the background from an aerial photo of the city...but where's the fun in that?)

Hey, here's a trade tip for ya. At larger bookstores, you can find books of preprinted perspective grids over which you can use tracing paper, or you can slide the grids under your actual pages if you're using a light box. Although these grids won't help you know when, where and how to use perspective, you won't have to physically rule the lines out each time.



**THREE-POINT PERSPECTIVE** is where we end. Unless you're Picasso, there's no such thing as four-point perspective. Now, I know all this may seem a bit confusing and daunting, but take it slow. None of this is too hard. Just keep things in perspective. (Sorry, I couldn't resist.) Now get out of here and get to work. Thanks for reading.

# SHADING

BY MARTIN WAGNER

MARTIN SEZ:
ERICA'S RIGHT, GANG!

BASICALLY, WHEN YOU DO A DRAWING, THERE ARE *TWO* TYPES OF LIGHTING THAT WILL AFFECT HOW YOU SHADE...

**① SOURCE** (or KEY) **LIGHTING:**

THIS IS OBVIOUSLY *WHERE* THE LIGHT IS COMING FROM. IT COULD BE THE SUN, A LAMP, WHATEVER.

**② AMBIENT** (or BOUNCED) **LIGHTING:**

THIS IS LIGHT THAT IS REFLECTED OFF WALLS OR OTHER OBJECTS IN THE PANEL AND BOUNCED BACK ONTO THE SUBJECT OF THE DRAWING.

... *Now...*

THE LESS STUFF THERE IS TO BOUNCE LIGHT...

...AND THE HARSHER AND BRIGHTER THE LIGHT IS... THE DARKER THE SHADING.

**EXAMPLES:** (these are kinda general, still...)

I • GUY IN DESERT, NOTHING AROUND FOR MILES
• BLINDING SUNLIGHT
• **VERY DARK SHADOW**

II • GUY IN FULLY FURNISHED BEDROOM
• LIGHT FROM CEILING & TABLE LAMP
*Whole lotta bouncin' goin' on!*
• **LITTLE TO NO SHADING**

*SO ANYWAY....!*

**HOW TO SHADE...AN OVERVIEW:**

YOU CAN DO HAND-SHADING, SUCH AS **CROSS-HATCHING**, THOUGH IT TAKES PRACTICE AND ONLY REALLY LOOKS GOOD WITH A CROWQUILL PEN.
*(kind of a pain, too)*

YOU CAN CUT SHADING **FILM** or **TONE.** SOMETIMES YOU HEAR THIS STUFF CALLED "ZIP-A-TONE." ACTUALLY, THEY'VE GONE OUT OF BUSINESS. I USE FORMATT.™

Note: LAY OFF THIS STUFF IF YOU'RE DOING A COLOR COMIC!

**OR,** SOME COMICS TODAY LIKE *LUFTWAFFE 1946* USE SOFTWARE LIKE **ADOBE PHOTOSHOP**™ TO DO THEIR SHADING.

**EXPERIMENT WITH LOTS OF TECHNIQUES & FIND WHAT WORKS BEST FOR YOU!**

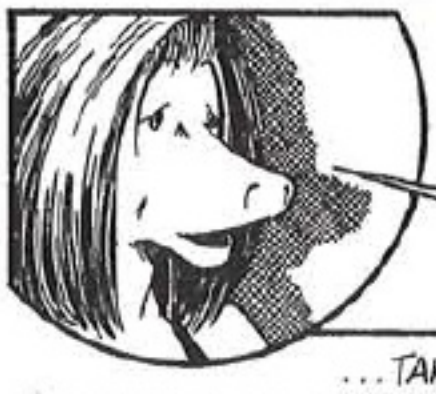
"OKAY, WELL, THIS IS COOL AND EVERYTHING, BUT HOW DO I **DO** IT?"
★ FEAR NOT, WIZ-KIDS. OVER THE NEXT TWO PAGES, ERICA'S GONNA WALK YOU THROUGH IT, STEP-BY-STEP!

**WHAT A DIFFERENCE SHADING MAKES!**

HERE'S A DRAWING OF THAT CHICK-MAGNET **JOEY**, WITH NO LIGHT & SHADE. DULL, FLAT, A BIG YAWN.

AHH, MUCH BETTER. LOTS OF DEPTH AND MUCH MORE 3-D. SOURCE LIGHT SHINES DOWN FROM UPPER RIGHT; AMBIENT LIGHT BOUNCES UP FROM LOWER LEFT!

# HOW TO SHADE BY HAND



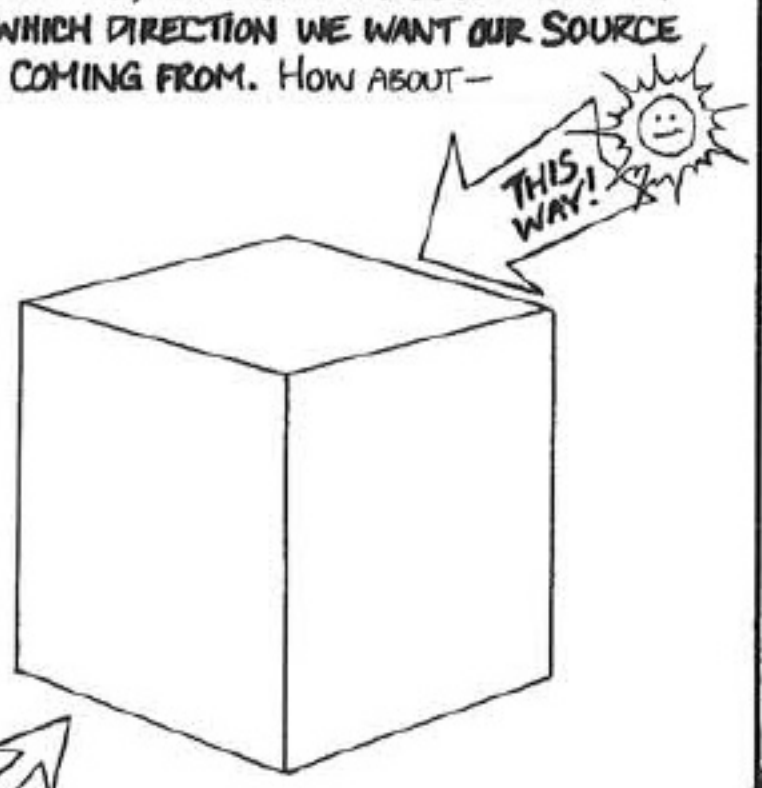

...TAKE A LOOK AT THE DIFFERENT LAYERS OF CROSS-HATCHING YOU CAN DO.

CROSS-HATCHING IS MADE BY DRAWING ROWS OF LINES AT 90-DEGREE* ANGLES TO EACH OTHER!!!

*WELL, IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE EXACTLY 90 DEGREES, BUT YOU GET THE IDEA. ANYTHING OVER 4 LINES MIGHT AS WELL BE SOLID BLACK.

OKAY, HERE'S OUR CUBE!

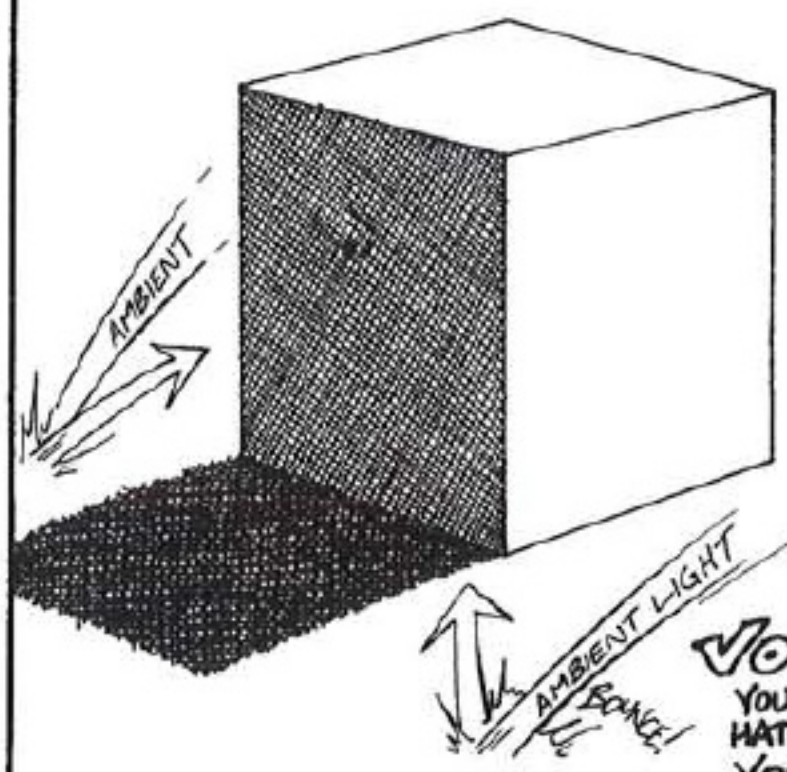
YEP, THAT'S A CUBE, ALL RIGHT. SO LET'S START BY DECIDING **WHICH DIRECTION WE WANT OUR SOURCE LIGHTING COMING FROM.** HOW ABOUT—




THAT MEANS WE'RE GONNA SHADE **THIS** SIDE.

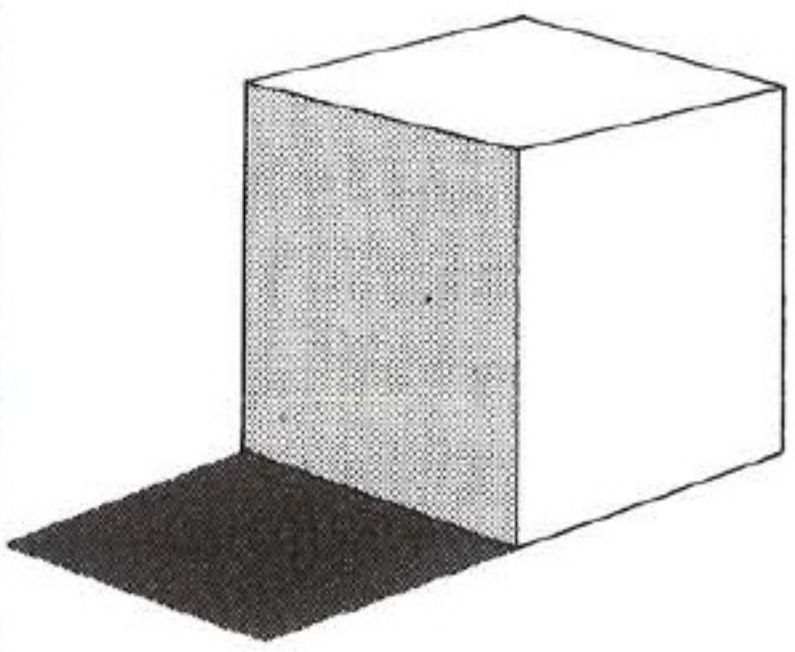
NOW, WE WANT THE SHADING ON THE CUBE TO BE A LITTLE BIT **LIGHTER** THAN THE SHADOW ON THE GROUND. WHY?? BECAUSE OF ALL THAT BOUNCING AMBIENT LIGHT, REMEMBER? SO:

- **2-LINE** CROSS-HATCHING ON THE **CUBE!**
- **4-LINE** CROSS-HATCHING ON THE **GROUND!**



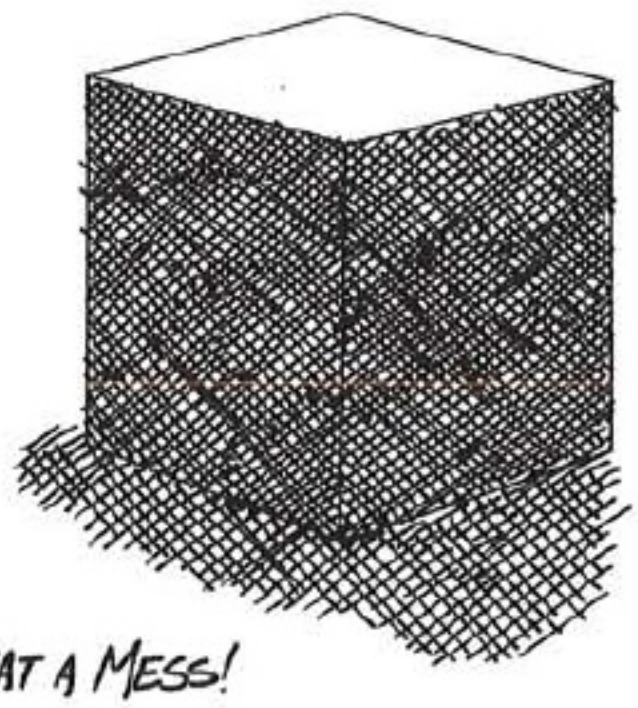

**VOILÀ!** YOU JUST CROSS-HATCHED A CUBE! YOU ROCK!!

NOW IT'S THE SAME APPROACH WHEN YOU CUT **SHADING FILM.** (WE'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO CUT IT ON THE NEXT PAGE.) SEE? WE USED SLIGHTLY LIGHTER TONE ON THE CUBE ITSELF. EASY.



THIS IS WRONG! WHY?

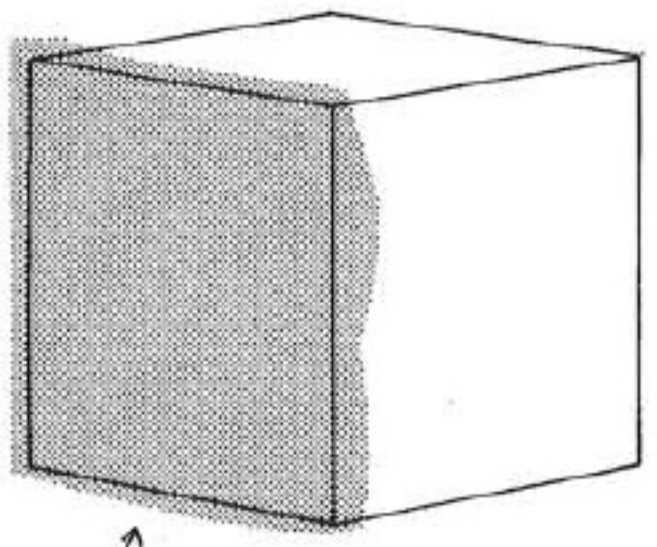
1) LINES ARE THE SAME BOTH ON THE CUBE AND THE GROUND. THE DRAWING LOOKS FLAT.
2) SHAPE OF THE SHADOW DOESN'T MATCH THE CUBE SHAPE. SO WHERE'S THE LIGHT SOURCE COMING FROM?

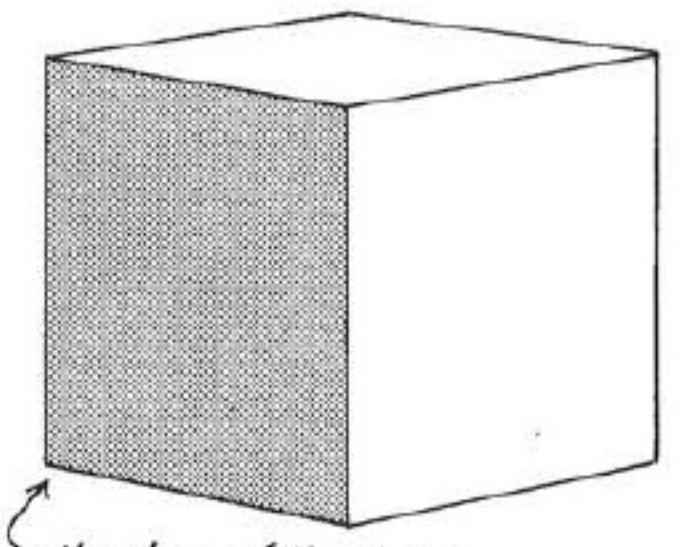


WHAT A MESS!

# HOW TO CUT SHADING FILM...

THIS STUFF IS PRETTY EASY TO USE (BUT IT HAS SOME DRAWBACKS).



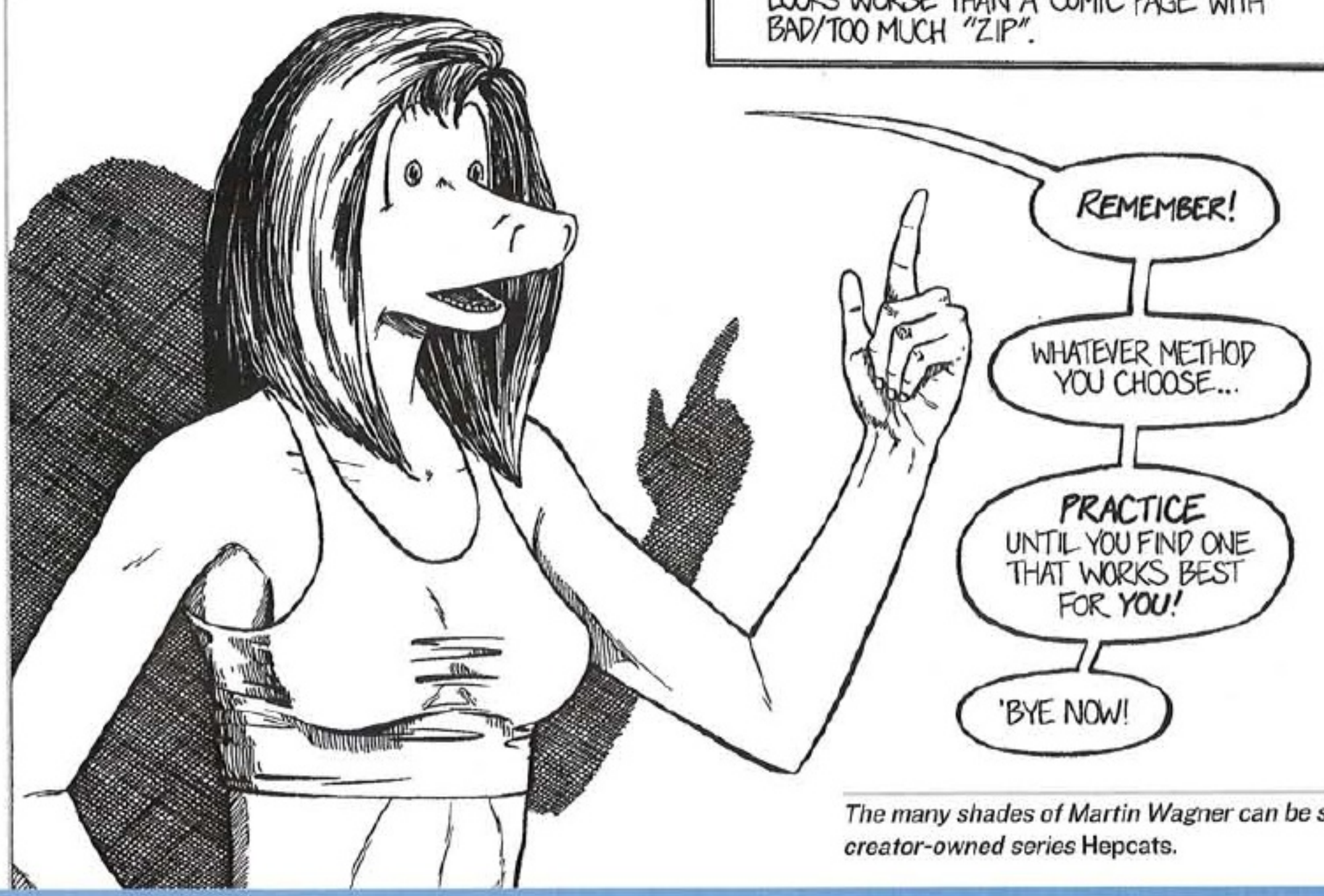




1. MEASURE THE AMOUNT OF FILM YOU WILL NEED. (HINT: IF YOU HAVE A LIGHT TABLE OR LIGHT BOX, IT'S A LOT EASIER.) USING AN X-ACTO™ KNIFE, CAREFULLY CUT THE FILM, LIFT IT FROM ITS BACKING, AND STICK IT OVER THE PART OF THE DRAWING YOU WANT TO SHADE.

2. TAKE YOUR X-ACTO KNIFE AND TRIM OFF THE EXCESS FILM.

## DRAWBACKS TO USING FILM:

- IT'S **EXPENSIVE**! ANYWHERE FROM $5 TO $10 PER SHEET!!
- LOTS OF ART SUPPLY SHOPS DON'T STOCK IT ANYMORE. ☹
- YOU SHOULDN'T USE IT UNTIL YOU'VE GOTTEN THE HANG OF HAND-SHADING. NOTHING LOOKS WORSE THAN A COMIC PAGE WITH BAD/TOO MUCH "ZIP".




*The many shades of Martin Wagner can be seen in his creator-owned series* Hepcats.

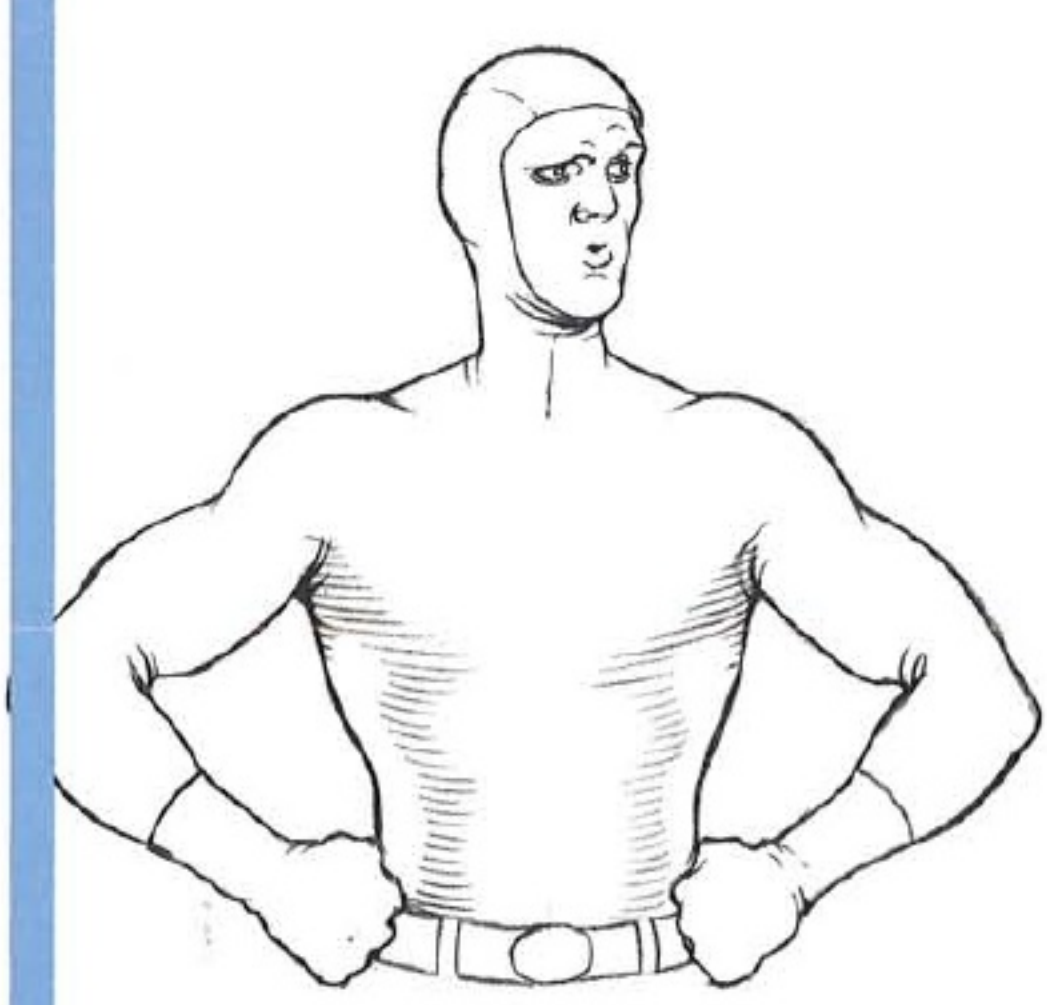
# HEAD&TORSO

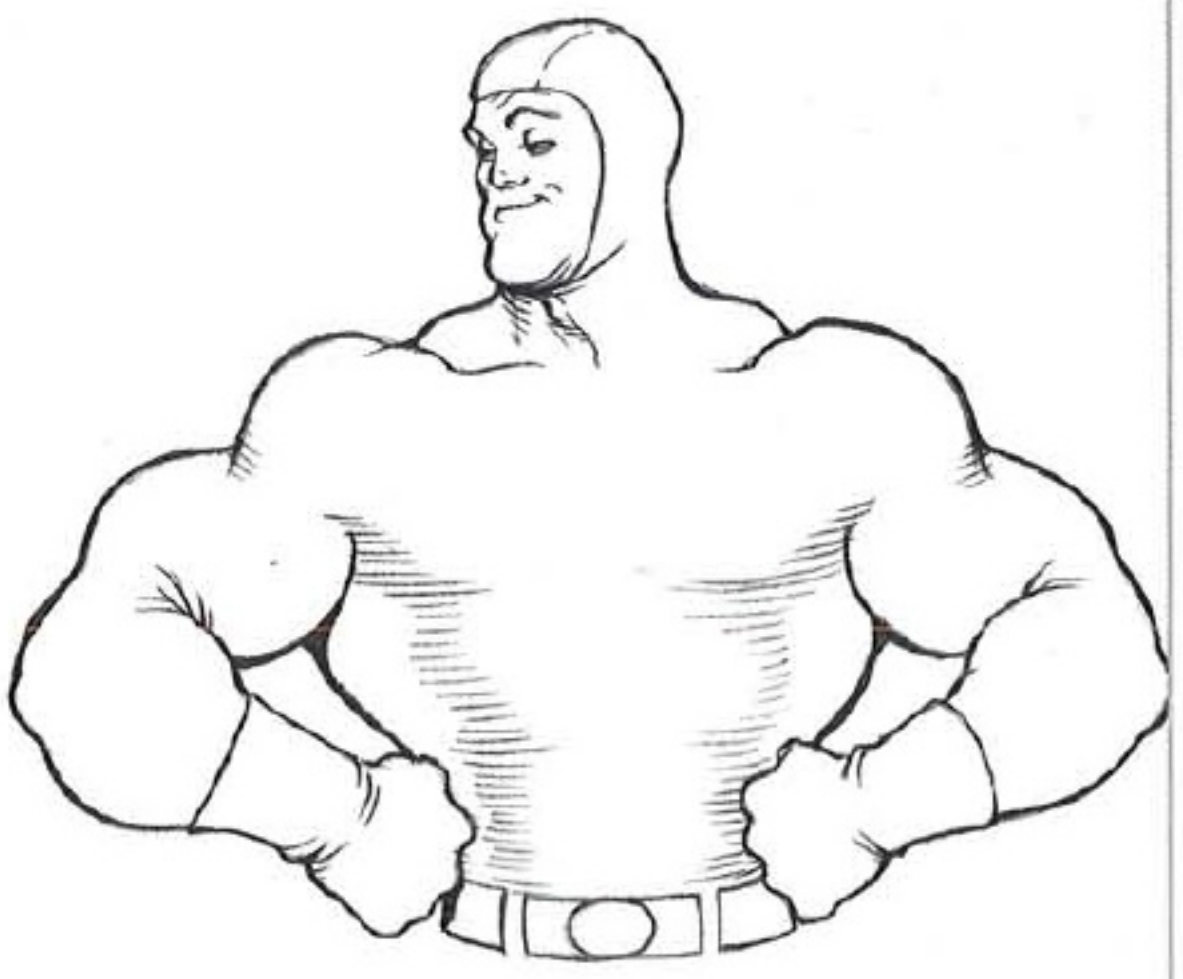
## EGGHEADS

The standard shape for the human head is an egg/oval. But we can have a bit of fun by starting off with other basic shapes like a circle, rectangle, square and triangle. Play around...experiment...see what you can do with an octagon or a figure eight!

## SUPERSIZEIT!

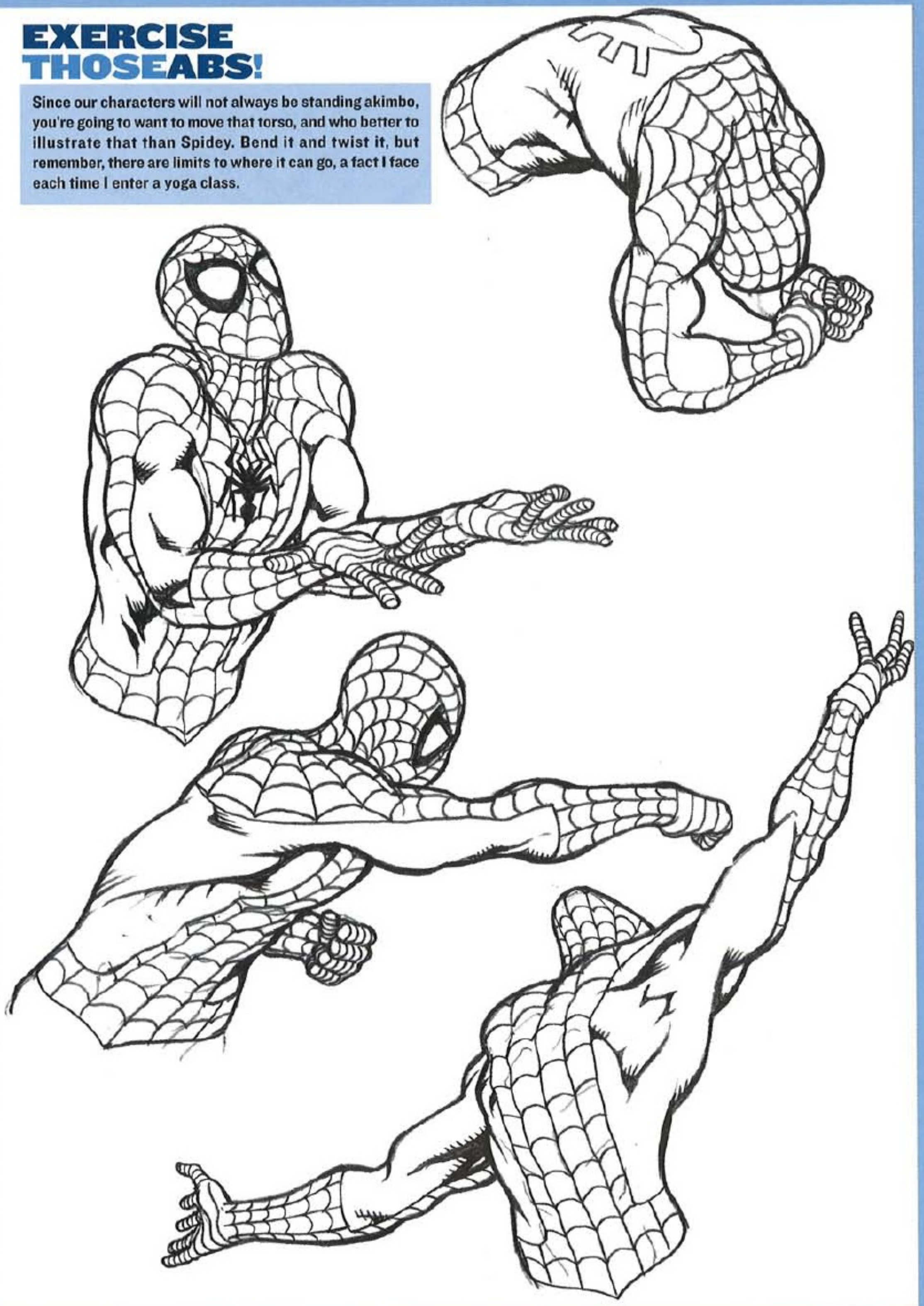
What's the difference between a normal guy and a superhero? Let's say we're having superhero auditions and these two guys show up. The first guy, well, he's in decent shape. He seems to work out. Probably keeps his cholesterol down. But, if you're being roughed up by a cadre of hooligans, you're going to want candidate number two swooping in to your rescue. It's the size. While I'm a big proponent of varying body types, for your *super*heroes (and -villains), make 'em big!





# EXERCISE THOSEABS!

**Since our characters will not always be standing akimbo, you're going to want to move that torso, and who better to illustrate that than Spidey. Bend it and twist it, but remember, there are limits to where it can go, a fact I face each time I enter a yoga class.**



# HEAD&TORSO

## SEXEDUCATION

What are the differences between the male and female torso? Well, luckily, we have Shanna the She-Devil and Ka-Zar emerging from a refreshing swim to illustrate the differences for us. With women, I go for the classic hourglass shape, whereas the men look more heroic with a "V" shape to their torsos. With women, I tend to make the lines softer. I don't put a lot of definition on them. The simpler, the better. For the men, hard and cut. I try to see as much musculature as I can.

## HIGHDEFINITION

When you've got all of these elements worked out, you move on to your finished torso. As discussed in the previous lessons, become familiar with anatomy. Know the difference between the abs and the pecs, the lats and the delts, as well as their proportion with each other and...Voilà! You can draw your own Daredevil!

# FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

BY KEVIN MAGUIRE

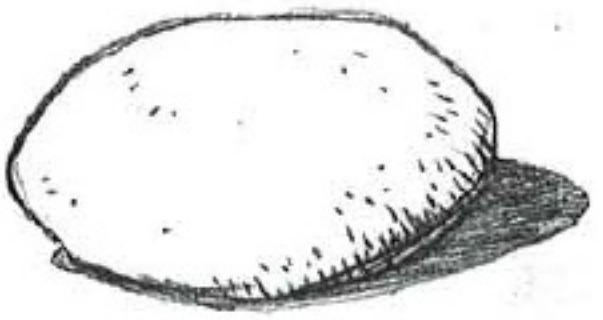
Ever since I got started in this biz, people have always commented on my use of faces, asking me who my influences were. That's easy: Chuck Jones.

If you're not hip to old Warner Bros. cartoons, he's one of the all-time great animation directors and creator of Wile E. Coyote and the Road Runner. Check out any scene where Wile E. sets a trap for his fleet-footed adversary and notice the smug look on his face. No need for dialogue. Then watch the trap go horribly wrong. For me, the hysterical part wasn't when the boulder crushed him, it was the pathetic look on Wile E.'s face just seconds before, when he realized he was screwed.

Knowing just what type of expression to give your character is an important skill. So grab your pencil and let's get emotional!

## CREATINGLIFE

I once had an idea for a comic following the life of a rock. Yeah, I can hear you: "The story of a rock? Who cares?!" Sure, intellectually, we might learn something about geology, but emotionally, you're right. Who cares? There's nothing to relate to, and that's my point.



## KODAKMOMENT

Okay, you're given a script where Hawkeye and Captain America are chatting with a couple of women. Hawkeye's doing the talking. Let's say his dialogue's something like this:

"Hello there, ladies. You're looking mighty fine. I'm Hawkeye of Avengers fame and this is my trusty little sidekick, the Capster!"

The interesting expression here belongs to Captain America. It's a snapshot in time. The exact moment he hears his intro. Not before. Not after.

Now, there are a lot of valid directions you could go with his look, like intense fury or surprise. I chose this moment, because it's the most interesting. It's during an emotional transition between being happy and insulted. It's a reaction that's unique to this moment, as opposed to showing him purely insulted which could apply almost anywhere. (Especially with friends like Hawkeye.)

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# FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

## CHARACTER ACTING

A good way to work is to think of yourself as a director, and your characters as actors. It's your job to make them perform. Personally, I never think of comic characters as costumes with powers. To me, they're people. They each react to things differently and you don't need dialogue to get that across.

Let's use the X-Men gang as an example. Here's the story: Professor X heads into the den and fires up the Nintendo, but it won't work. It's broken! So he goes around asking who broke it. Each X-Man answers with the same four words: "I didn't break it!"

See if you can match the correct face to the thought:

A) I didn't do it, but I'm sure I'm gonna get blamed for it.
B) I can't believe you're asking me that question.
C) Oh, darn! I didn't know it was broken. That sucks!
D) How many times do I have to tell you, no I didn't!
E) Okay, I did it. But I'm not going to admit it.

I'm not gonna tell you who was thinking what. If you can't figure it out, then I haven't done my job properly. Break off into individual discussion groups if you're having trouble.

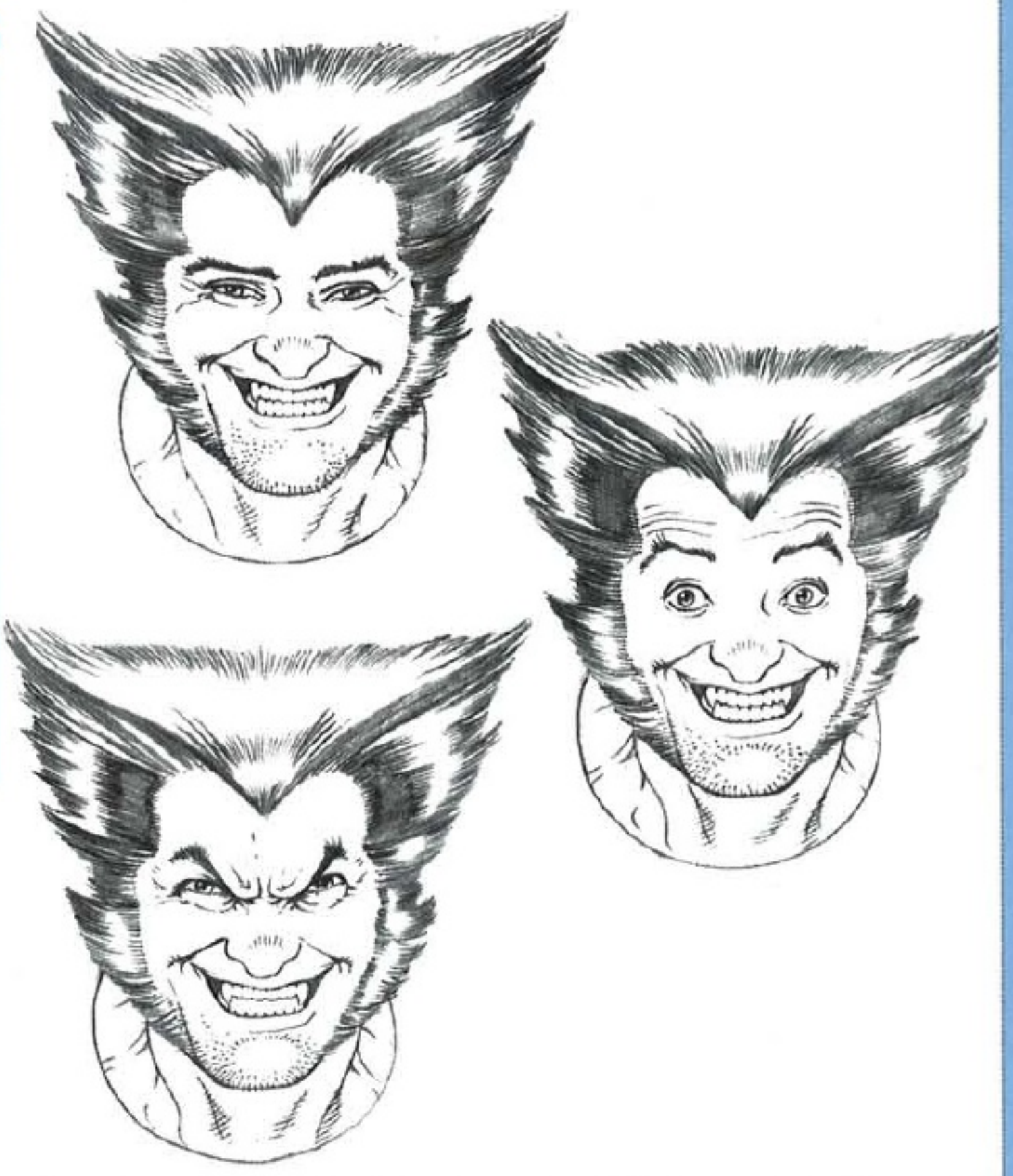
## THE TWO-FACE THEORY

Let's take a look at what I call my "two-face theory." It's a bit more exaggerated than the Captain America shot on the first page, and it's something I like using with deranged characters to give them a quirky sort of expression.

It's real easy. Take a shot of the happy Sabretooth and paste it together with a shot of him furious. Check out the results by placing your hand over one side of the third illustration, then do it to the other side. Get it? It's kinda fun. Now try it with other expressions to see what kind of combinations you can come up with.

## INYOUREYES

Okay, you're penciling X-Men and the script says two words: "Wolverine smiles." But there's more to a smile than just flashing enamel. Ask yourself what else is involved. How does he feel? Why is he smiling? Each of these three faces is exactly the same except for the eyes (and the eyebrows and forehead). Doing different things with the eyes dramatically changes the meaning of his smile. In the first illustration, Wolverine seems sincere, almost charming. In the second, he looks giddy, even goofy. Not at all the Wolverine we're used to. But the third one, that's the Wolverine we know and love. That's a smile that says "I'm gonna kill someone and enjoy it!" It's the eyes that make all the difference. They're not called the "windows to the soul" for nothing.



## THEEYESHAVEIT

I hate drawing characters who have no pupils. (And no, I don't mean students!) You lose a valuable tool without them. Martial artists suggest looking in your opponents' eyes to see when they'll attack. (Or maybe I heard that in some Jackie Chan movie.) Anyway, check out these shots of Wolverine with his mask on. You get a better sense of what he's thinking when you actually see his eyes. Granted, not showing his eyes works to Wolvie's advantage in battle, but you see what you're losing as a storyteller.

# FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

## LINE STRENGTH

I was taught that when drawing comics you need bold, strong lines. And in a lot of cases, that works just fine. But it doesn't have to be a universal rule. There are certain moments where the characters aren't strong. They're human. They feel a wide range of emotions.

Take Reed Richards. He's just been given some devastating news. The first illustration shows a typical comic-book reaction. Yes, it indicates shock, but you've gotta agree that the second reaction goes much deeper. He's completely staggered and emotionally vulnerable. On an action-movie star scale, the first shot's on a Jean-Claude Van Damme level, whereas the second one's more on a Harrison Ford level. You know what I mean? So don't be afraid to use different types of lines to add depth and serious emotion to your character's face.

## WRINKLE CREAM, PLEASE!

When drawing young people, especially women, you have to watch out. Make sure not to go overboard on the wrinkles. Look at the examples at right. Sure, Kitty Pryde looks really upset in the second shot, but all those wrinkles also make her look about 10 years older than she should be. So be careful; it's a delicate balance.

**Y'KNOW,** I could go on for pages upon pages showing you how to draw an angry face or a lustful face or a sad face, but that's not the point I want to illustrate. Facial expressions are one of the storytelling tools you have to work with. They're not about penciling a goofy face or an interesting one; they're about penciling an appropriate face. Get inside your characters. Know how they feel from panel to panel. Use a mirror if it helps. And if a picture's really worth a thousand words, then the right facial expression's worth a thousand thought balloons. Have fun, and I'll see ya in the funny books!

# HANDS BY GARY FRANK

First, the bad news. Hands are capable of assuming as great a complexity and variety of shapes as all the other parts of the body combined, so the idea that you can learn to draw them from a few scant pages is a little optimistic, to say the least.

As for the good news, I'll be giving you some "basic" pointers. The best way to really learn to draw hands is (as with most things) to practice with references. And loads of references are available...just look around you. Check out hands on TV. In movies. In magazines. Why, you can even use yourself as a model. After all, most people contemplating a career in drawing have access to at least one hand...

## BUILDINGBLOCKS

When you begin, there are certain fundamentals which should be kept in mind. All hands have an underlying foundation. **Figure A** shows an extremely simplistic hand shape in which you can see its basic structure—the "hard points," if you like. These are the primary building blocks of the hand—they are always present no matter what position the hand adopts. The four fingers all move in a fairly restricted plane, but the seam which separates the thumb gives it opposable movement **(Figure B)**.

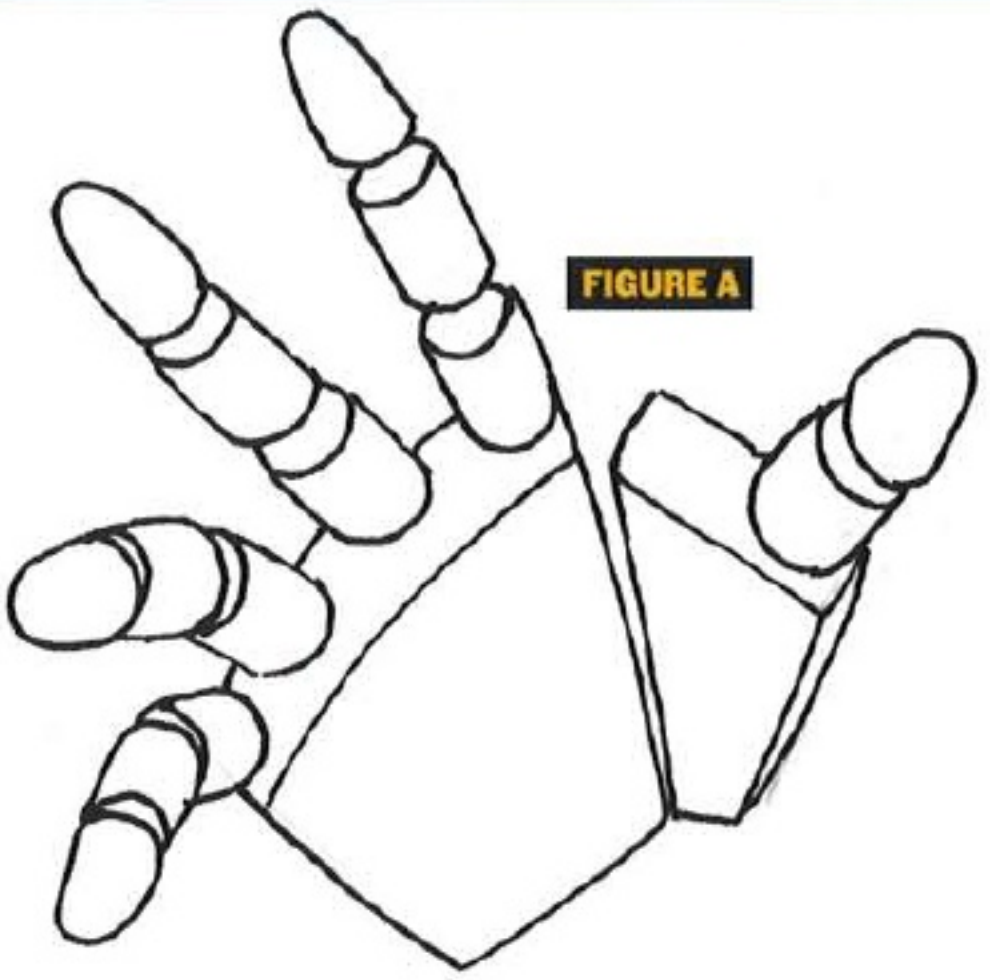


FIGURE A

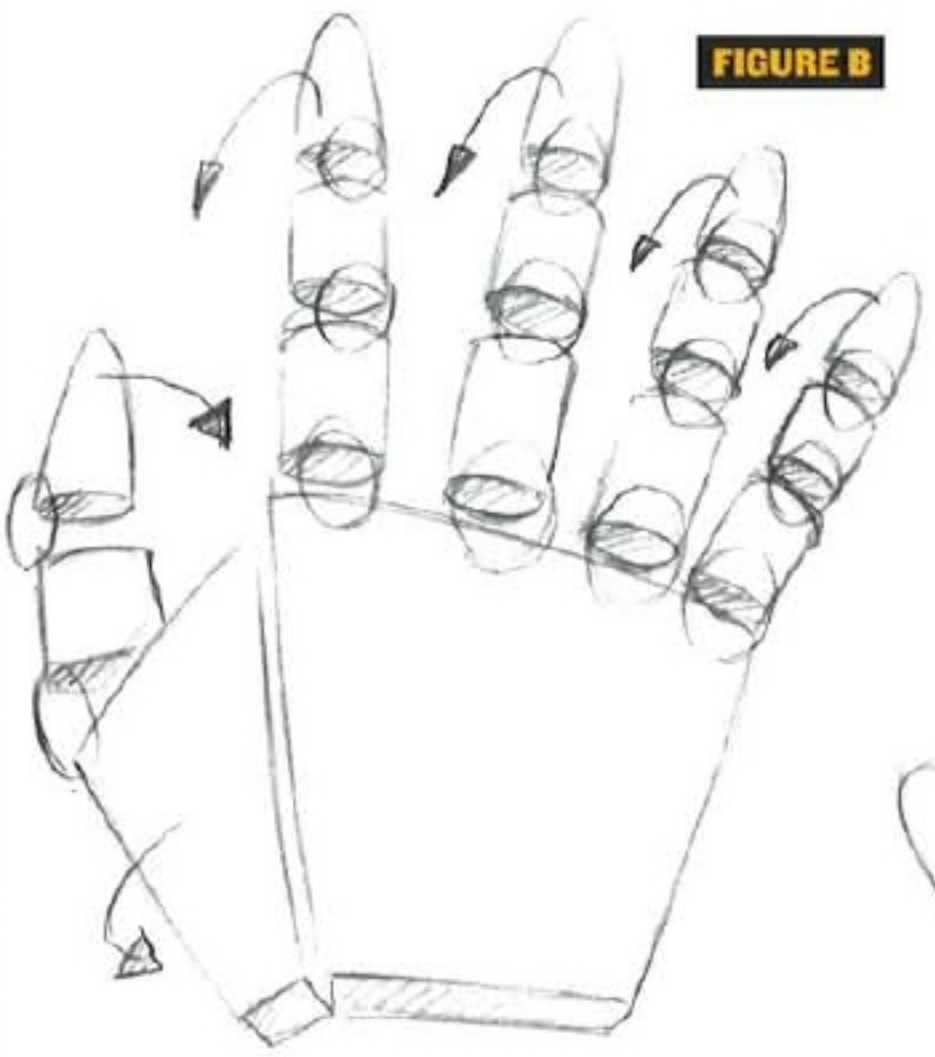


FIGURE B

The good thing about using a "building blocks" approach is that it helps you remember you are dealing with a three-dimensional structure. But while you are practicing with these shapes, you must be looking at real hands for reference. If you leave this important step until later, you will have picked up lots of bad "mechanical" habits and rules which you will find difficult to reconcile with the image of the real thing. I have no idea how many hands I have drawn over the years, but I am still surprised by the shapes they make when performing certain tasks **(Figure C)**.

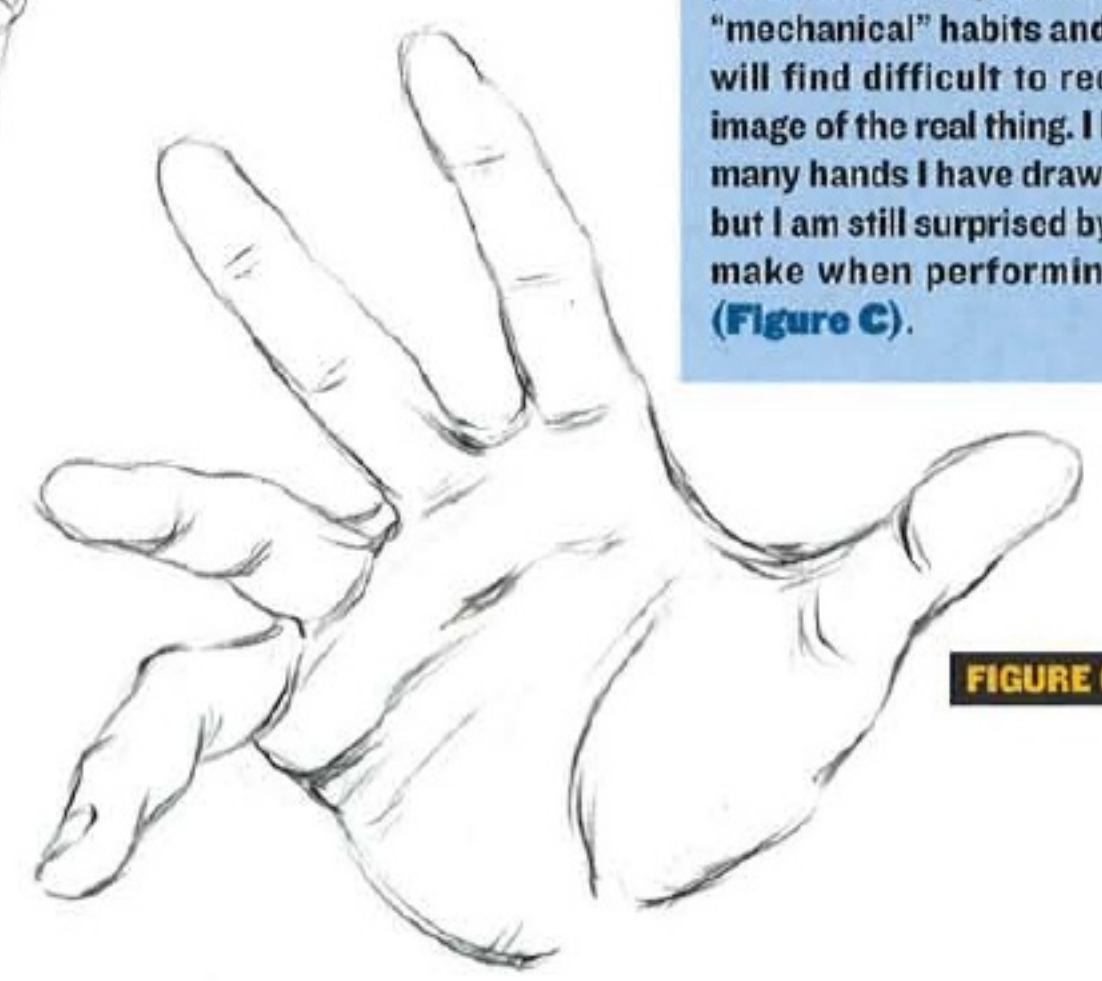
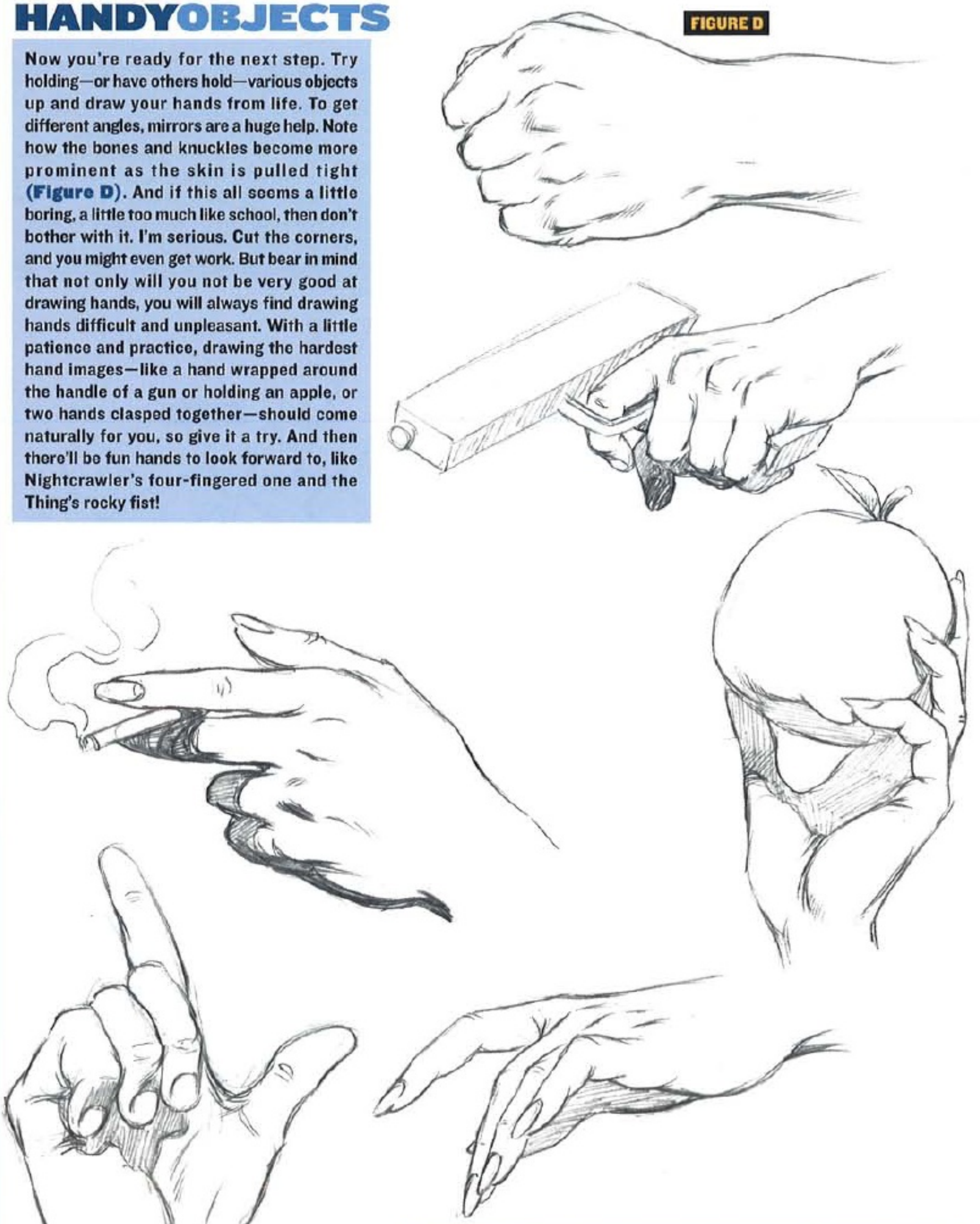


FIGURE C

## HANDYOBJECTS

Now you're ready for the next step. Try holding—or have others hold—various objects up and draw your hands from life. To get different angles, mirrors are a huge help. Note how the bones and knuckles become more prominent as the skin is pulled tight **(Figure D)**. And if this all seems a little boring, a little too much like school, then don't bother with it. I'm serious. Cut the corners, and you might even get work. But bear in mind that not only will you not be very good at drawing hands, you will always find drawing hands difficult and unpleasant. With a little patience and practice, drawing the hardest hand images—like a hand wrapped around the handle of a gun or holding an apple, or two hands clasped together—should come naturally for you, so give it a try. And then there'll be fun hands to look forward to, like Nightcrawler's four-fingered one and the Thing's rocky fist!

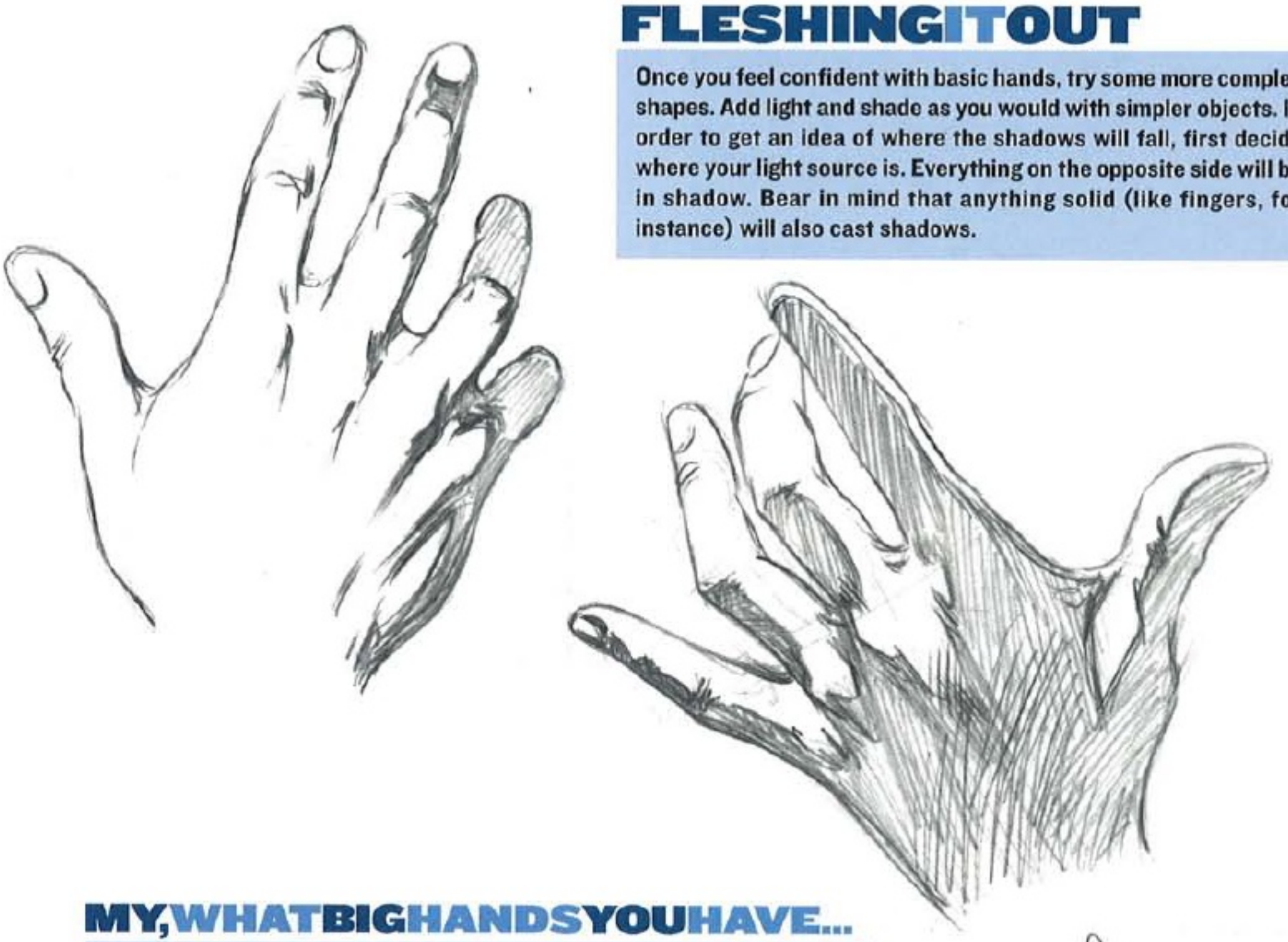
FIGURE D



The worst thing you can possibly do at this stage is to start copying another artist's finished linework. You are creating a hand, not reproducing someone else's ciphers. Copying an artist's work will lead to flat, unconvincing images. Besides, each time you copy an artist's lines, you are not only reproducing their flaws—you're adding some of your own.

## FLESHINGITOUT

Once you feel confident with basic hands, try some more complex shapes. Add light and shade as you would with simpler objects. In order to get an idea of where the shadows will fall, first decide where your light source is. Everything on the opposite side will be in shadow. Bear in mind that anything solid (like fingers, for instance) will also cast shadows.



## MY,WHATBIGHANDSYOUHAVE...

Hands come in many shapes, sizes and textures. You should try to give your characters hands with an appropriate look. For instance, a woman's hand **(Figure E)** will generally be more slender and smooth than a man's **(Figure F)**, while your average comic bad guy might have a hairy mitt with the odd chipped fingernail **(Figure G)**. The most important point is that there can be a lot of character conveyed simply by the type of hands you choose to give someone (and while you should always try to be consistent, a weird combination of these three hands would be interesting). See, hands are more important than you thought!

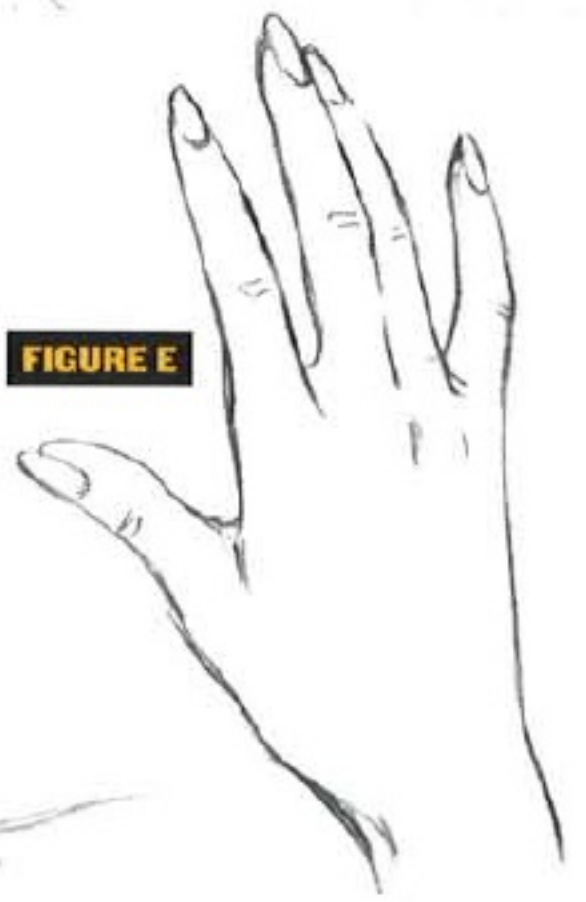


FIGURE E

FIGURE G

FIGURE F

# HANDS

## EXPRESSYOURSELF

Another way that hands can help in storytelling is by enhancing expressions. A good actor uses body language to communicate a multitude of feelings and ideas, and so should a good comic artist. Look at the effect the addition of a hand has on this costumed hero. In **Figure H**, you can't tell if he's thinking, angry or confused. But by adding just one hand, you instantly realize that he's pondering something. Now, isn't that much better than just a word balloon saying "Hmmmm...?

FIGURE H

FIGURE I

Same thing with the girl who's been asked a question in history class. She doesn't look too confident, but in **Figure I**, it takes a simple hand to make her look totally clueless. (Of course, she might just be *acting* dumb.) Remember: body language!

**AT THE END** of the day we are trying to create characters in which a reader can believe and identify. Using hands and body language is a subtle (yes, that means you won't get much credit for it) way of achieving this.

And there you have it. Hands. They're not easy, but when used properly they can improve a comic to no end. Besides, nearly every comic character has at least one, so you really ought to learn to draw the darn things. Best of luck!

---

*Gary Frank's handiwork can be seen in such comics as Marvel's* Incredible Hulk *and mature-readers* Supreme Power, *DC's* Supergirl *and* Midnight Nation *from publisher Top Cow.*

# LEGS BY BART SEARS

# SIZES&SHAPES

**Now that you've got all the basics, it's time to take a look at different sizes and textures. Here I've provided a number of comparisons to show you a variety of feet.**

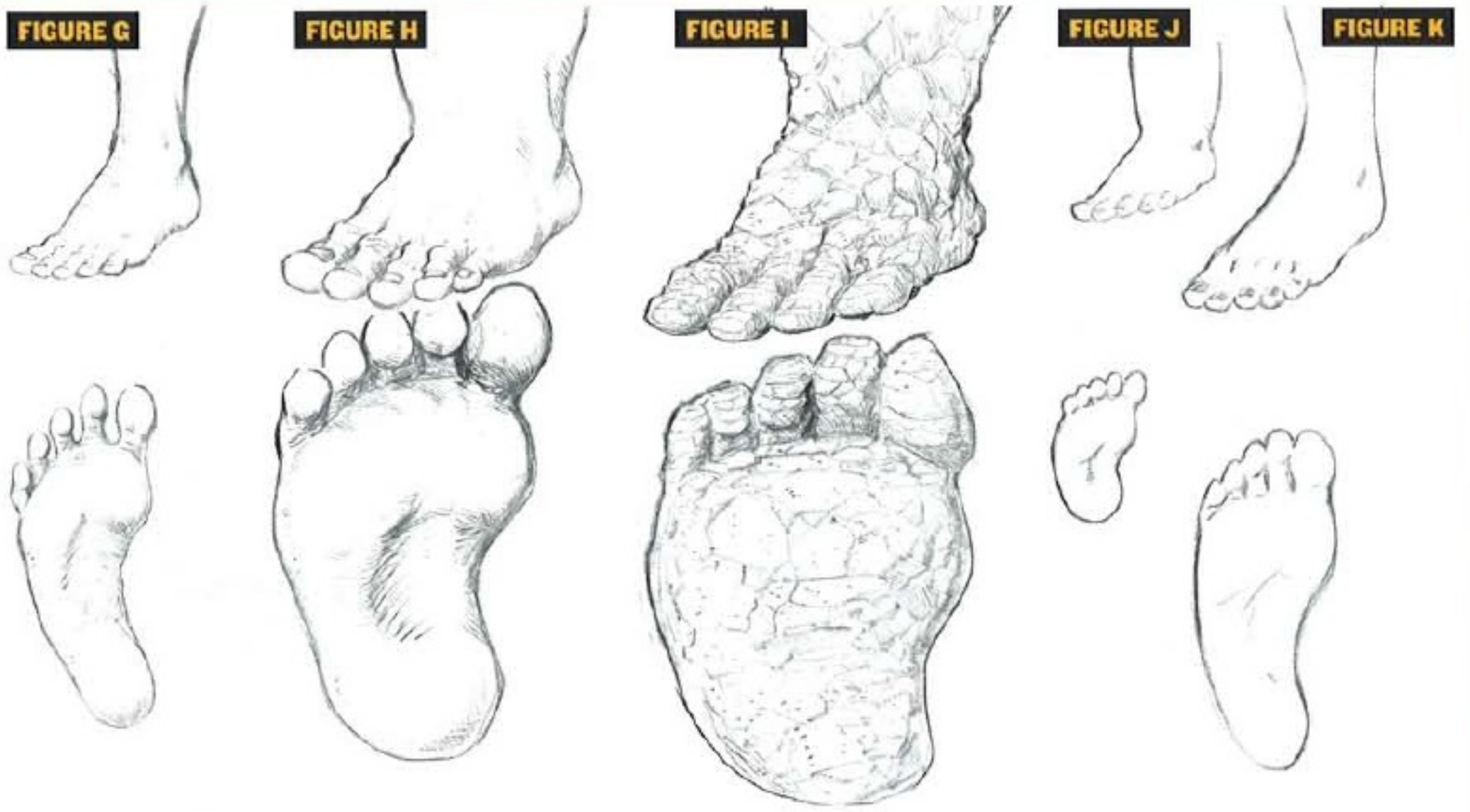



**Figure G:** Here's an average human adult male foot. We can determine that from the shape, size and the bit of hair on the leg.

**Figure H:** Here's the Hulk's foot. By using the same anatomy lessons, but making everything fatter and bigger, he looks more believable. Consider the size of the creature that a foot has to support. The bigger the creature, the bigger the foot should be! If a normal big toe is about the size of a canister to a 35mm roll of film, then the Hulk's should be the size of a soda can.

**Figure I:** Here's the Thing's foot. I imagine that because of his rocky skin condition, his little toe and fourth toe would sort of fuse together, which is why he seems to have four toes. Again, sticking to the correct anatomy and then adding the rocky pattern to the shape makes the Thing's foot convincing as the foot of an existing creature. It's important to indicate where his foot would bend and move. I drew smaller rocks in the bends to give the appearance of regular movement.

**Figure J:** A baby's foot should have very few bones showing through. Babies' feet and hands are small and undeveloped, so they should appear soft and tiny. This can be achieved by drawing fewer shadows, or smooth shadow lines.

**Figure K:** Lastly, here's an average, human adult female foot. A good method of indicating a female foot is to make it narrower than a male foot, and smoother in texture. With the line work, less is more. Since many women shave their legs and paint their toenails, this also is a nice detail to add.

**I CAN'T STRESS ENOUGH** that the best place to learn, like all things, is real life. Practice drawing interesting feet from magazines. Remember that style comes from you and your interpretation of real life through your imagination and art, not by copying someone else's style. The more you practice, the better you get! Ciao!

---

*Darick Robertson got his foot in the door with DC/Vertigo's* Transmetropolitan *and also has significant runs on Marvel's* Wolverine *and* Nightcrawler.

## CHAPTER THREE: PART 7

# WOMEN

BY JOSEPH MICHAEL LINSNER

**How do I draw women? Usually with a light blue ballpoint pen. (I hate drawing with a pencil.) How is the sexy girl, pinup kinda thing done? Well, like Ben Kenobi suggested, I use the Force. Meaning, I follow my instincts. I just draw what I like. If anyone else digs it or finds it attractive, then I am ahead of the game. Who can guess if we will find the same things sexy? The best that I can do is to tell you how I personally define *luscious* and then urge all aspiring devotees of the feminine form to explore their own vision.**

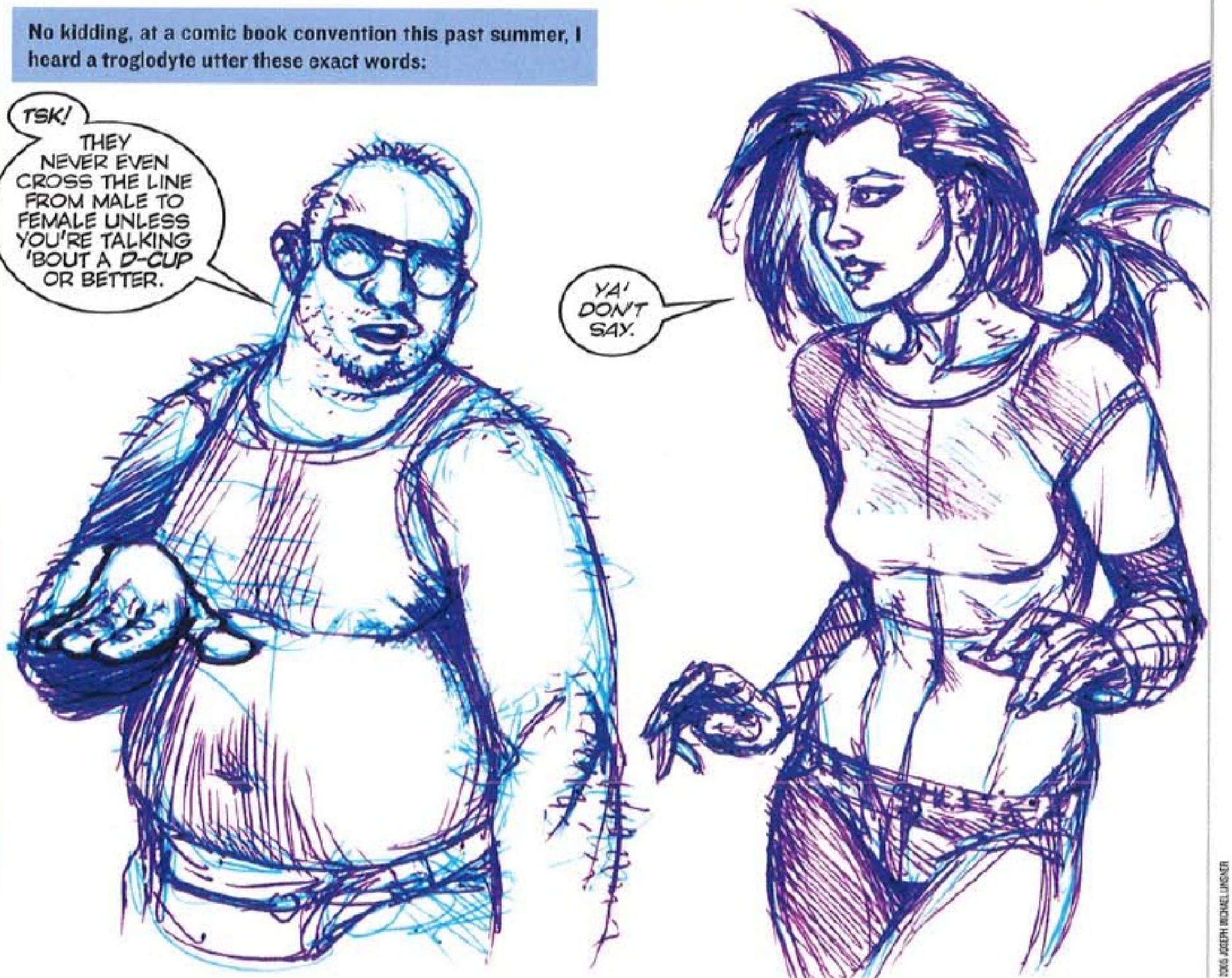
## DON'TBEABOOB

Taking a cue from fellow artist Mr. Adam Hughes (see page 58), let's look at the dictionary definition of "luscious": sweet, seductive, sexy, richly luxurious or appealing to the senses.

Yep, that is how I feel about the art of feminine beauty. The lesson of Vincent Van Gogh teaches us that "art" and "beauty" are highly interpretive terms. Poor Mr. Van Gogh barely sold any artwork while he was alive, and yet many years after his death his paintings are among the most famous, sought-after collector's items on the planet. Before you put pencil to paper, *please remember this!* All of the world's true artistic geniuses have walked through the fires of ridicule. The world always resists new visions. And yet, if an artist is on target, that is what the world wants from them most—*a new vision.*

First of all, let's all get over the boob thing. Try and figure out what, *besides mammary glands*, makes a woman a **WOMAN.** Girls are different than boys. They are curvy and mysterious. And besides, "boobs" can be purchased—and all enlightened souls know that anything you can put a price tag on is ultimately hollow. You can't buy real sex appeal.

No kidding, at a comic book convention this past summer, I heard a troglodyte utter these exact words:




DAWN ™ & © 2005 JOSEPH MICHAEL LINSNER

# THETRIPLETHREAT

Try and think about women. Girls. Incarnations of the Goddess. What is the origin and source of their special spark?

This "femaleness" is a mysterious thing, and everyone defines it in their own terms. Anyone attracted to the female must ask themselves, "What turns me on? What about the opposite sex hits me like lightning and instantly shatters my self-control?" I am—of course—writing this from the point of view of a heterosexual male. To any female artists out there reading this, if you are looking for some sort of cosmic insight, the best I can say is "good luck." Please don't ask me about the feminine/masculine mystery. Don't ask me why "tall and skinny" is sexy to some folks and grotesque to others. I'm just as lost as the next guy—I'm only following my nose.

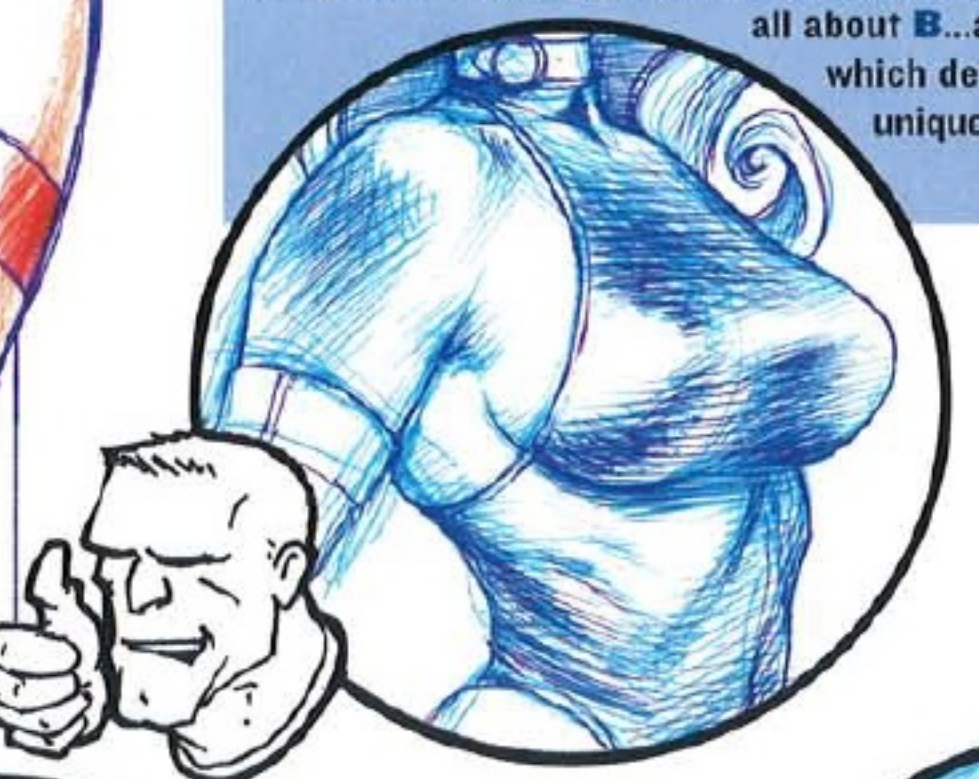
There are certain clichés of beauty—basic elements that no one really argues about. In America, men usually like to keep it simple and break down their preferences into three basic groups. According to Joe Lunchpail, what we got on the menu is:

**A. BREAST MAN**
**B. BUTT MAN**
**C. LEG MAN**

What a superhero team that would make!

Ladies and gentlemen, I am a guy, a *red-blooded, American guy*. Many is the time I have been out with a girlfriend and some female would walk by and totally blow my mind. My girlfriend would notice my reaction and say, "God, what a face—she is so ugly!" To which I will respond, "Yeah, but did you see her ___!" **A**, **B** or **C**, take your pick. Yeah, yeah, yeah, men are such pigs (smart men never argue this one). All I can say is that men and women see the world differently.

So... do we go after **A**, **B** or **C** if we want to capture something luscious on paper? Hey, if that is your thing, then by all means, go for it. One look at the work of Serpieri (of *Druuna* fame) and it will be obvious that his work is all about **B**...and that is the beautiful thing which defines his work and gives it its unique character.



## THEFINERTHINGS

Personally...I'm a face man. If a girl has the right face, I am putty in her hands. "You want my soul? Here, have it—it's all yours. Just grant me one kiss."

I love the popular physical attributes just as much as the next guy, but it's the subtler, less obvious things that get my attention first:

**1. HANDS**
**2. LIPS**
**3. EYES**

These are all elements with which people express themselves. Folks who fake E.S.P. are *totally* aware of this. In my art I am always trying to capture something that is beyond the verbal—something that words are at a loss for. I am certain that this is why my creator-owned comic *Dawn* makes absolutely no sense to some people. The right person with the right gesture can shatter worlds and raise empires. The right smile, half-crooked as if it is caught in a web of semi-denial. A feather-light touch on the shoulder giving a lover's consent, and the invitation of so much more...

## EYEOFTHEBEHOLDER

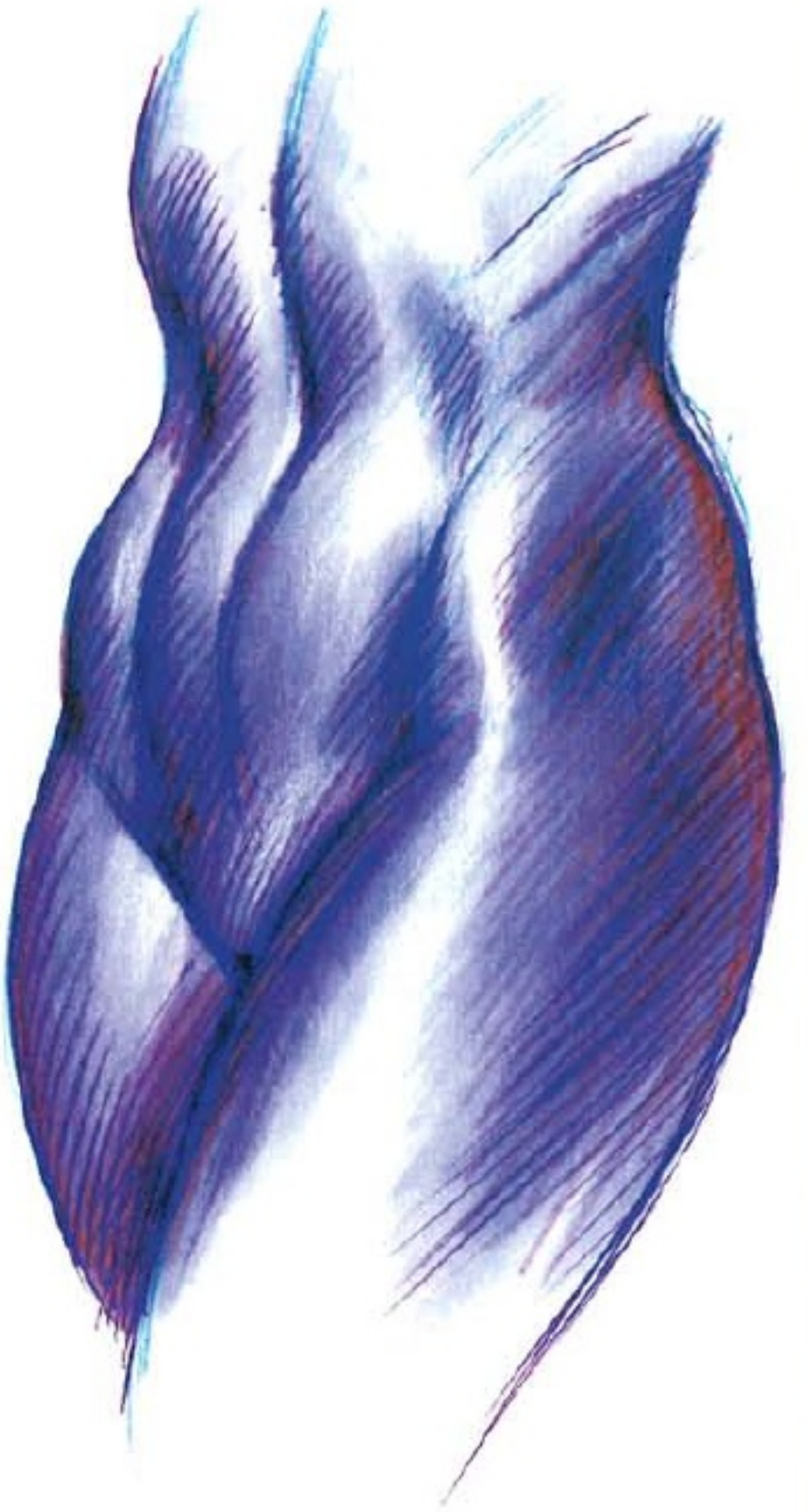
Once in a bar, I witnessed the arrival of the Prettiest Girl in Town. The crowd parted, and the Princess looked around the room, sadly trying to find her equal. She didn't; she knew that she wouldn't. Meeting her eyes, I was amazed by her cold disdain, the harsh and brutal judgment, the icy distance I found there. Clinically speaking, she was the prettiest girl in town—the right figure, the right nose, the right body weight. But to me she was abhorrent. I found her as ugly as hell because her soul was ugly.

In my work, I am trying to capture the *opposite* of that.

## BEINGHIP

Beyond a pretty face, is there any part of the female anatomy which **REALLY** makes me weak in the knees? *You bet.* To me, the force of femininity is defined by the hips. I love hips. I worship them. I adore them and am destroyed by them. I know that not all men appreciate luscious feminine hips. Hell, my last landlord took one look at a framed picture of my beloved Dawn hanging on the wall, and all he had to say was, "She's shaped like a pear."

Well...there's no accounting for taste.



## TAKEALOOKAROUND!

**I DO NOT** want to tell any aspiring artists out there what or what not to draw: "Draw long legs and thick, well-shaped eyebrows, that'll be sexy. And don't forget the pert, very round breasts."

Later for that. If you wanna draw or paint women, my sole advice is this—**LOOK** at them and study them. **DO NOT** look at books or magazines. Look out your window and down your street. *Women are everywhere*, and their beauty knows no bounds. I look at a lot of art, both highbrow and low, and I can say without hesitation that there is an infinite spectrum of feminine beauty just dying to be explored and captured on paper.

Look beyond the norm. Look beyond what the media (*yoiks—that includes this book*!) tells you, and find your own line, your own vision and your own idea of beauty. Have the courage to define and embrace what your own soul tells you a luscious lady is. Because in this hollow world of pre-packaged pop stars and silicone centerfolds, we need new visions—*desperately.*

*Joseph Michael Linsner, creator of the beautiful* Dawn, *also paints an eye-catching* Conan *on the covers of the Dark Horse Comics series.*

# SULTRY WOMEN

BY ADAM HUGHES (AND FRIENDS)

Well, hello! An aspiring young artist, I see! Do you think you've got it? Have you the mutant ability to make your heroines sultry?

My name is Wanda, and this is my friend Janet. If anyone can help you find an answer, it should be us! We can't teach you everything, but perhaps we can open a door or two for you that will send you off on your own personal journey into a much bigger world...

My only request is that you use what you've learned here wisely. I fear there are more artists out there who merely wish to pander to the masses than those who wish to create very attractive, yet very three-dimensional and believable feminine comic book characters. Remember—with great power comes great responsibility! I believe I read that somewhere...

## DEFINITIONS

Let's see...the *Webster's New World Dictionary* here in the library at Avengers Mansion describes sultry as "oppressively hot and moist."

Here we go: The second definition is "hot or inflamed, as with passion or lust." Well, now! I think that's what the *Wizard* boys invited us here to discuss. Wouldn't you agree?

## PRO TIPS

### NO ANIME ALLOWED

"Stop watching and mimicking Japanese anime. *Pokémon* won't get you a job at Marvel or DC. They see too much of that!" —Alex Maleev, *Daredevil*

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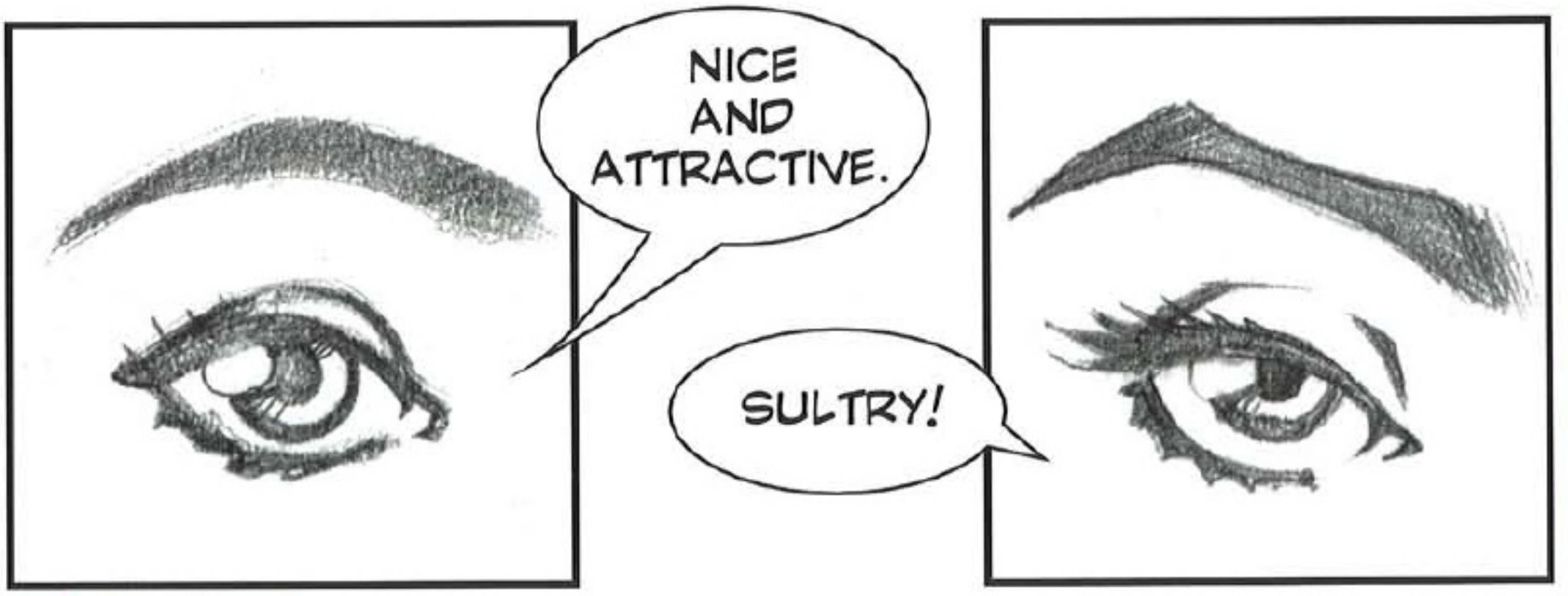
The problem is that, like art or music, it all sounds rather subjective, doesn't it? What you find sultry is probably very far afield from what I find as such. I'm sure none of you find androids attractive, do you!

I believe the most important aspect of sultriness I can impart to you—before we get to a few universal tips—is that it really has nothing to do with how a character looks! That's right. How a woman looks is quite often the least important ingredient in her witch's brew of sultriness. That's because sultriness is a character trait. It comes from within. It's an aspect of personality, not appearance. If your character isn't sultry at heart, no amount of lipstick and cleavage will change that!

Also, do me a kindness and please remember not to make all your female characters sultry. I know it's tempting, but if every lady in your comic is a passionate, lusty bad girl, well then, not one among them will stand out...will they? Of course not!

Well now, I could spend all day talking and fill this entire lesson with a lot of theory, but that's not what you ripped open this book for, is it? I shall assume that you already know how to draw a woman, and are ready for a few bits of advice that seem to work for virtually everyone.




## FACEIT

When drawing faces, try not to over-render. Too many lines clutter up a lady's face, and can even be mistaken for wrinkles.

Practice accentuating the eyebrows, eyelashes and lips, while de-emphasizing the features which can make a woman seem too harsh—like cheekbones and noses. Thicker, fuller eyebrows can really add to a sultry expression, especially when they have a slight arch to them. If you draw the lid covering the top part of the eye, it can heighten an already sultry expression!

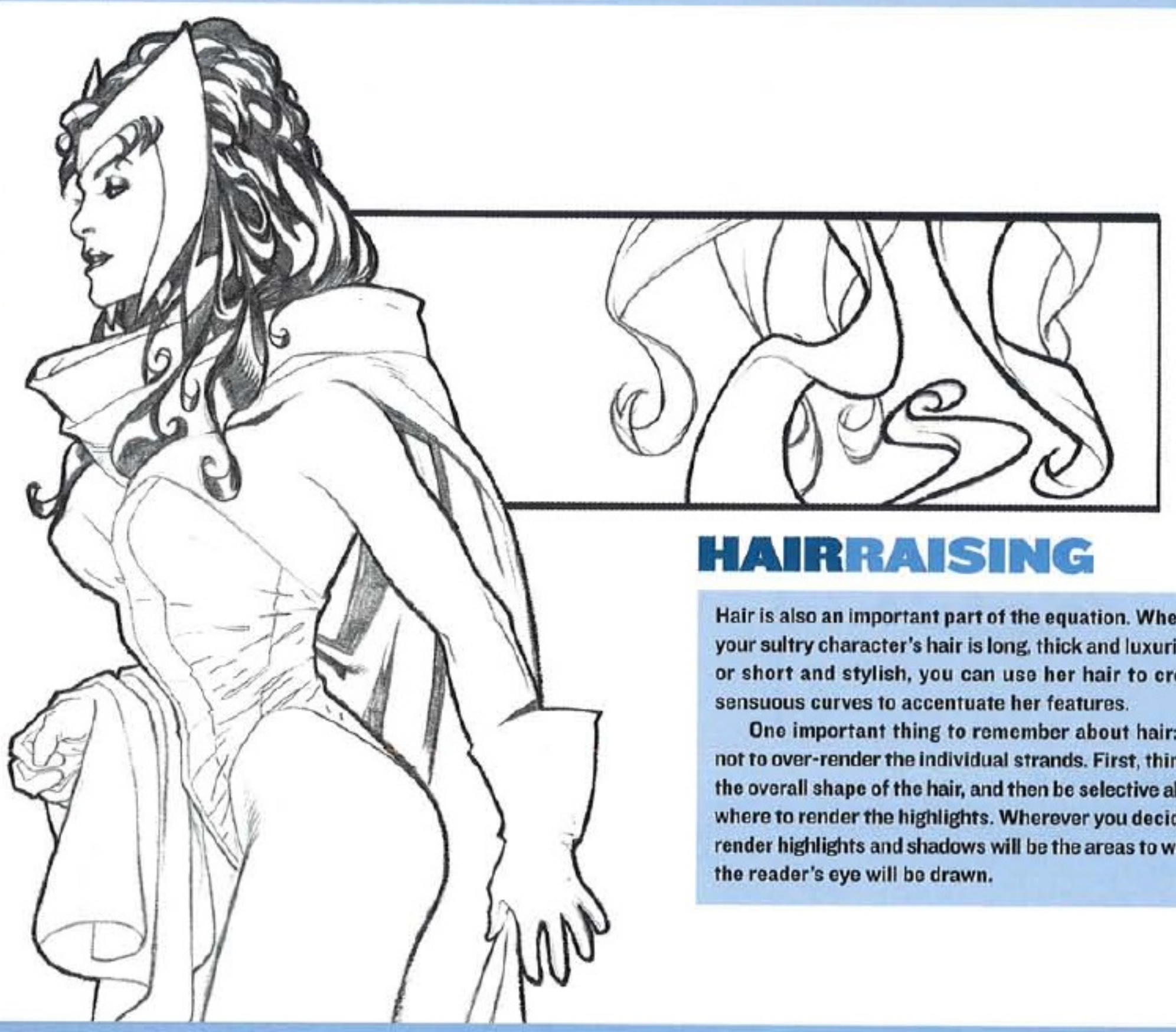
This won't help in panel-to-panel continuity, but it works wonderfully on covers: eye contact! When a reader feels that the lady on the comic is looking at him and no one else in the shop, it works wonders!

# SULTRY WOMEN

## PUCKER UP

There are many different ways to draw lips, but one tried-and-true way to give them a sensuous look is to draw them black, with little highlights on the top and bottom lips. This makes them seem deep and moist, which I've been told is very sultry!

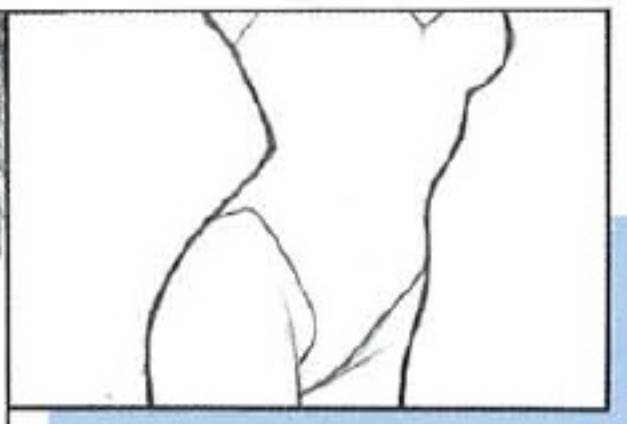
Thank you, Janet, for draining the last bit of austerity out of the proceedings. It is important to note, however, that less really is more when trying to render a truly sultry expression. Even if your favorite artist does it, I heartily recommend that you abstain from over-rendering a face. You won't become better by drawing one face for hours and hours; try spending those hours drawing as many faces as possible. Remember, you have to fail at something quite a few times before you can start to succeed at it.



## HAIR RAISING

Hair is also an important part of the equation. Whether your sultry character's hair is long, thick and luxurious, or short and stylish, you can use her hair to create sensuous curves to accentuate her features.

One important thing to remember about hair: Try not to over-render the individual strands. First, think of the overall shape of the hair, and then be selective about where to render the highlights. Wherever you decide to render highlights and shadows will be the areas to which the reader's eye will be drawn.



## BODY TALK

If you practice enough, you'll notice that almost all the lines you use to draw a sultry woman are smooth, soft and curvaceous. Try not to use many hard angles, whether drawing facial features, hair or even a pose! When drawing, use lines that curve gently, like the letters "S" or "C." Try it...not everyone can make it work. Can you?

Speaking of poses, I suppose we ought to at least address the issue, even though we're running out of space rather quickly!

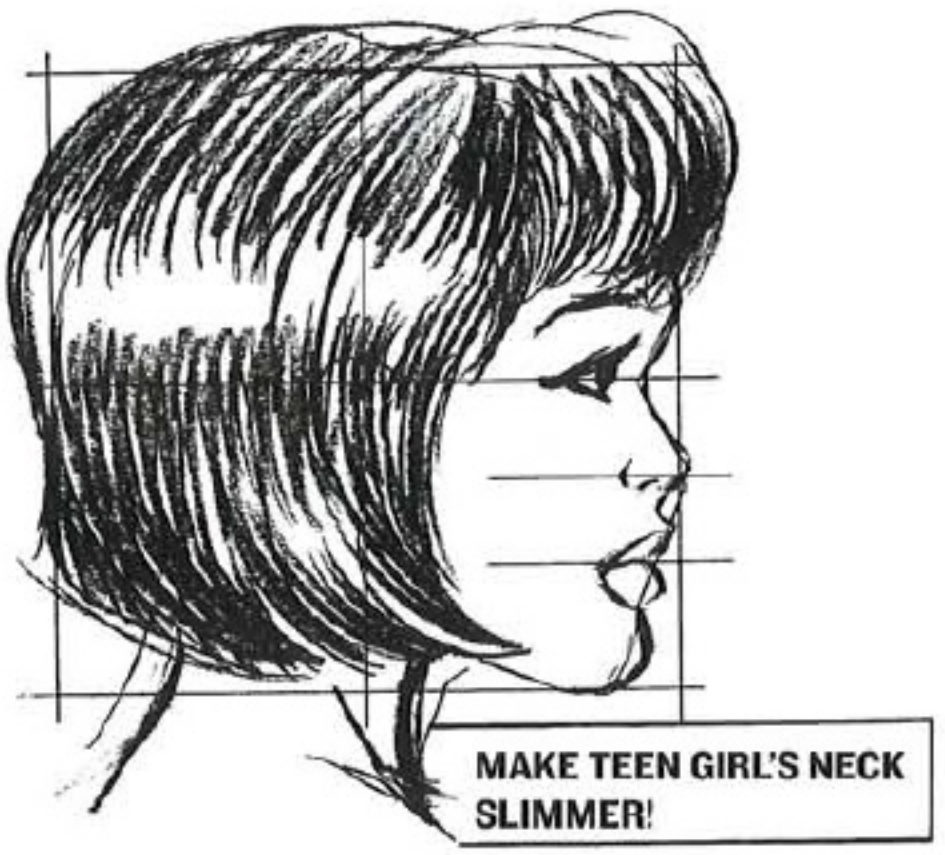
Try not to overpose your characters. As we stated earlier, sultriness is a character trait; if your heroine is naturally sultry, then she shouldn't need to strike a pose to get her innate sensuousness across. Practice drawing sultry women in repose, rather than in a forced posture. Remember, a truly sultry lady will be that way naturally, even if no one is around to look at her. Sultriness should never be an act.

## CHESTOFTHEBEST

Finally, I feel the need to discuss the...ahem...Zen and Tao of endowments. Many of you may think me a bit of a hypocrite when I tell you that the size of a woman's chest has little to do with a woman's attractiveness, but it is the truest thing I say to you today.

If bigger is truly better...

Uhh...with that said, I think we shall take our leave of you. I sincerely hope that you are one of the few who shall grow as an art




In addition, the few facial contours we do decide are necessary should look softer and more rounded. While a lantern jaw and furrowed brow make a full-grown hero look grim and heroic, they're out of place on a 14-year-old. Simplifying and rounding out the face is key to an adolescent look. Also, make note of the girl's slimmer neck, which helps to accentuate her femininity.

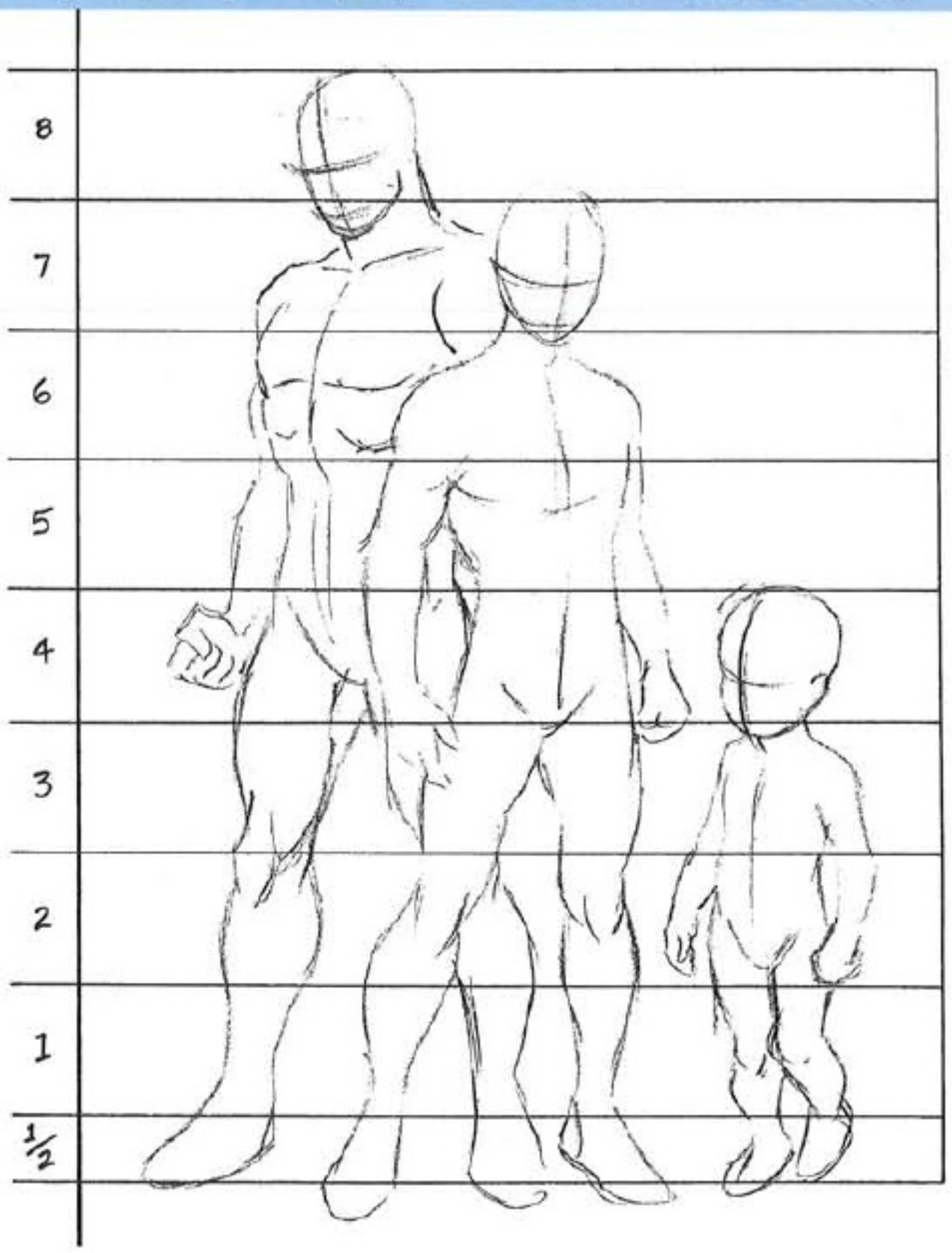
## TEENSPIRIT

The true mark of a teenager, however, is exuberance and unrestrained emotion, which can be played out through various facial expressions. I often take the license of exaggerating these expressions (anger, surprise, amusement and so on) to help portray these emotions to a greater and sometimes comic effect. This is what I find most appealing about drawing teen superheroes—I can cut loose a little more without damaging the "heroic image" of a character.

Now that I've shown you the main points of drawing teen superheroes, it's likely that I've raised as many questions as I've answered. But the bottom line to drawing teen heroes (or anything else, for that matter) is to make the character convincing to your reader. This requires experimenting, bending some rules that you've been strictly following, and some tough self-criticism and evaluation of your work. Now on to children...

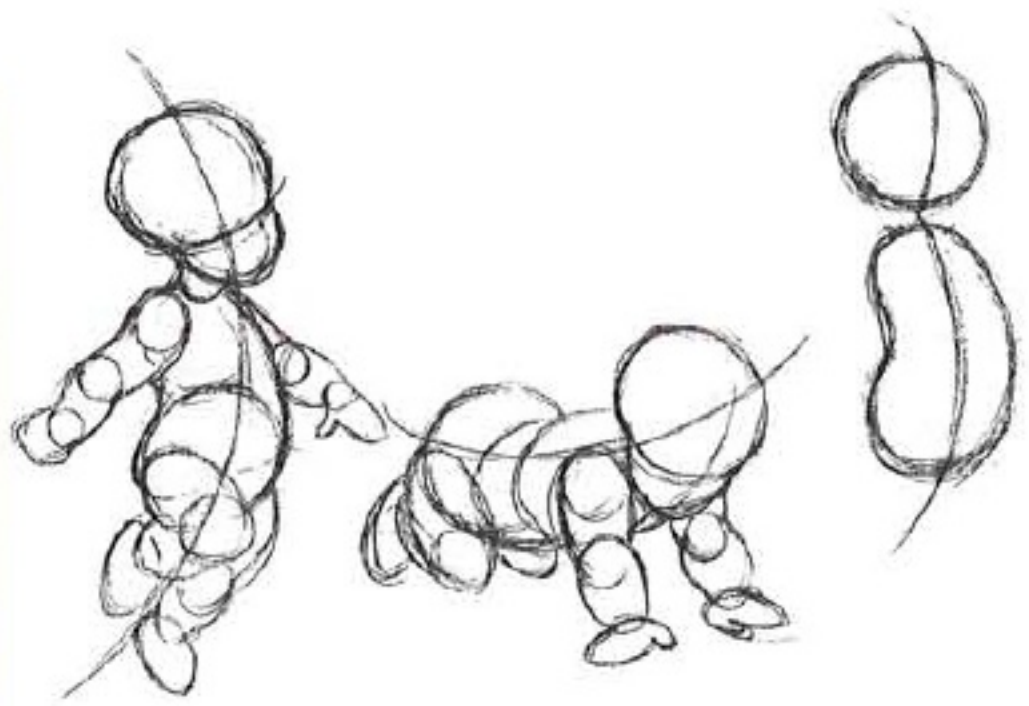
## BABYTALK

The key element in drawing the human figure—heroic male or female, teens or children—is the head-to-body size ratio. As we've established, the heroic male/female stands at 8 1/2 heads tall, to emphasize the larger-than-life aspects of a superhero. The teen's stature is roughly 7 to 7 1/2 heads tall, and less powerful and dynamic than its adult counterpart. When drawing children, our aim is to emphasize youth. In many ways the goal of drawing kids is the same as with drawing teens, but we take it further by manipulating the head/body ratio to a greater effect. As you can see in the figure below, by keeping the figure's head the same size as the more adult figures, and reducing the height, we've come up with a figure of more childlike stature. The shoulder width is further narrowed, the torso becomes less angular, and the arms and legs are proportionately shorter than the longer-limbed, more muscular heroic and teen figures. By further changing the proportion of the head to the body's height, we can draw children from infants to preteens.



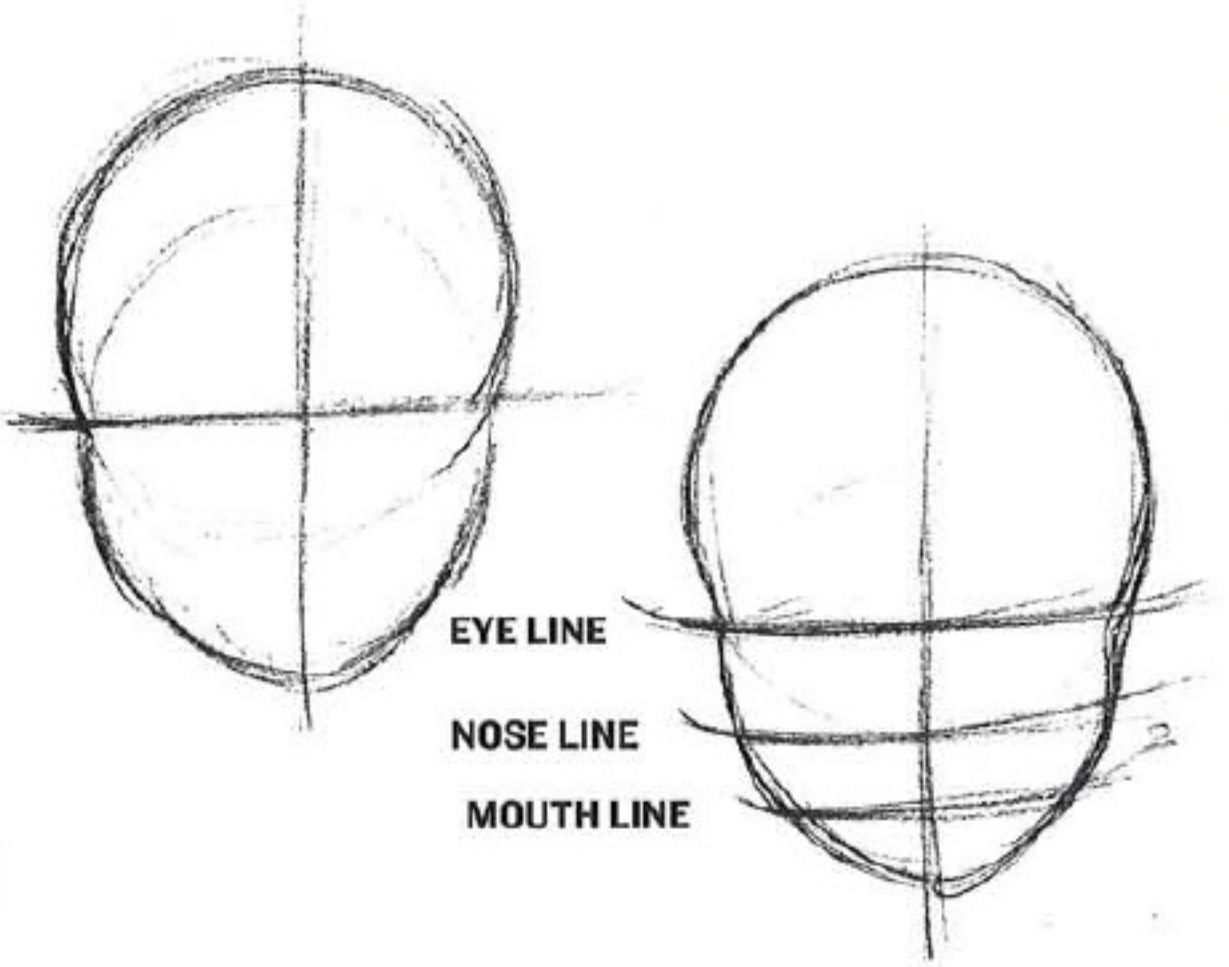

## THEINNERCHILD

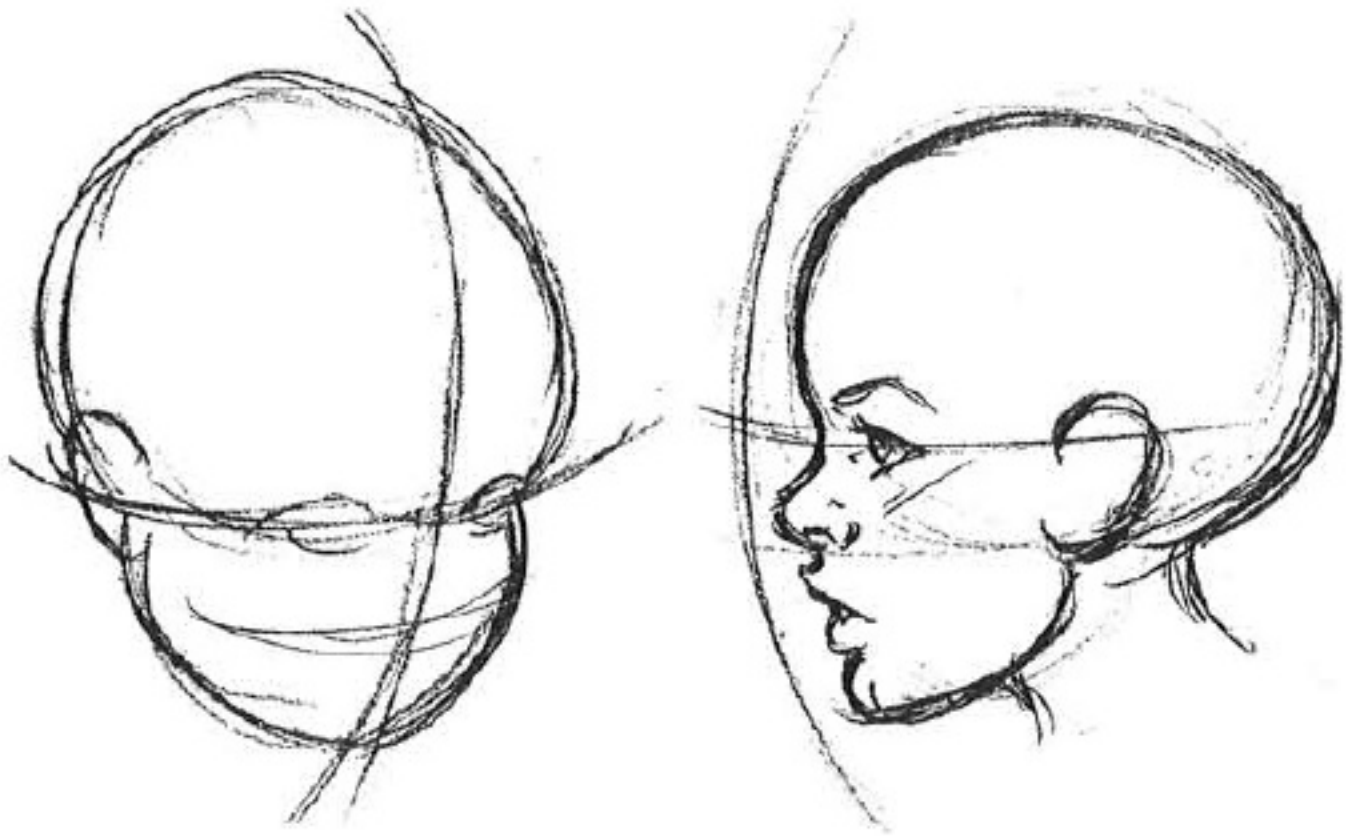
Here's a figure of about 3 1/2 heads tall. While adults and teens are linear and angular, a child's figure is rounder, and made up of a series of circles and curves. These figures are of a toddler's stature, up to about the age of five. You'll note that these figures are made up of shapes resembling circles and jellybeans. By stretching these shapes out a bit, the figures 'grow up' a bit. I'd say that kids from 6 to 12 years of age are in the neighborhood of 5 or 6 heads tall, 4 to 6-year-olds are 3 1/2 to 4 heads tall, toddlers 3 to 3 1/2 heads tall, and infants 3 heads tall. This part is where all the hard work and practice comes in. There's really no better way to work these differences out than by trying out figures at different ratios. And by the way, unlike their mature counterparts, there's no difference between younger boys and girls.



## KIDS'STUFF

Let's keep working with circles here. When drawing kids, to keep 'em looking young, we keep 'em round. Let's take two circles, one slightly bigger than the other, and superimpose them like this, the larger circle above the smaller, if we stretch them out top to bottom, we'd start to enter the territory of an adult face's proportion, viewed straight on. If we push them closer together, top to bottom, we get a more elfin or childlike shape for the face. Now by bisecting the face with our handy center line and eye line we've drawn our roadmap for the features. The features of a child will generally take up the lower half of the face, with lots of space above the eye line. I find this helps emphasize once more that our character is quite young.



## ROLLWITHIT

We're rarely left to draw anyone exclusively straight on, or in profile. We have to give our character mass and dimension. Like a globe, we can rotate the head, and our map lines will curve on its surface like latitude and longitude lines. This will set out features no matter what the angle. In order to give the skull more shape, I've curved the lower half of the face into more of a heart shape to give some definition to the jaw line.

## GROWINGUP

Here's where the personality and individuality starts to take shape in our character. In the case of children, the face really is an open book. Joy, anger, fear, surprise and all other emotions are clear, and often broad and exaggerated. It's here where we can separate boys from girls, through their hair dress. Try to keep your lines to a minimum, particularly around the eyes and mouth, and watch out for angular lines in the cheeks and jaw. Nobody will go for a craggy look on a 5-year-old.

Obviously, there's a lot more to drawing children than can be covered in this limited space. The rest is really in your hands. Practice some of the things I've shown you, and feel free to experiment. There's no substitute for hard work and determination...when you've nailed it, you'll know.

*Tom Grummett has illustrated every age group imaginable in books like Marvel's* Generation X *and* New Thunderbolts, *and DC's* Robin.

# PROPORTIONS

BY DALE KEOWN

Hey there! In the books I've drawn (*Incredible Hulk*, *Pitt*), proportions have always played a BIG part. When *Wizard* first approached me to do this piece I was reluctant, though. Y'see, I wasn't sure I'd have enough time and space to do it justice, or even be able to put into words the things I've come to understand about drawing proportions. "Proportion is the relation of one part to another or to the whole with respect to magnitude, quantity or degree." (Yeah, I looked it up!) Anyway, correct proportioning is probably the single most important part of the drawing process. (No pressure or anything!) Instead of giving you a straightforward "how to" approach, I've decided to basically give you a walk-through of my observations. So let's start sizing things up.

## ASHOULDERTOCRYON

Here you can see the difference between these two *Incredible Hulk* regulars: Doc Samson, a man of heroic proportions, and Rick Jones, an average-sized guy who keeps in good shape. Rick stands about 5'8" tall and, using his head as measurement, is about three and a half heads wide from shoulder to shoulder. The guy's no slouch and has certainly proven himself in battle. Still, he looks pedestrian standing next to the 6'6" Samson, who's at least five heads wide. Sorry, Rick.

Exaggerating the musculature system, especially the limbs and torso, can add dramatic presence to any superhero.

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## PRO TIPS

### ONE MAN ARMY

"Do it all yourself. In other words, write and draw a complete comic to prove you can do it, especially to yourself. And then do it again and again until it's good enough that someone would actually pay money for it." —Mike Allred, *X-Statix*

## HIGHS&LOWS

In this example, Wolverine is the shortest hero of these three (and of most comic characters, for that matter), but, in my opinion, he looks the toughest. That's because even though he's only 5 feet tall, he's just as wide as Captain America, who stands roughly 6'4" tall. Spider-Man—standing at about 5'10"—has closer to "normal" proportions of an average man in really good shape. So while you should definitely keep your characters' heights in mind, also pay close attention to their widths.

FIGURE A

## HEADGAMES

With **Figure A**, I've depicted Wolverine in three different ways to demonstrate how head size affects how large or small your whole character looks. Try covering up two of the figures at a time and look at each one individually. In **Figure A-1**, you see him with his properly proportioned head. He appears short yet very powerful—a real scrapper. In **A-2**, I've drawn his head much too small—he looks like he's 7 feet tall! In **A-3**, his head is obviously way too big, unless, of course, you're penciling *The Zany Adventures of Li'l Wolvie.*

# PROPORTIONS

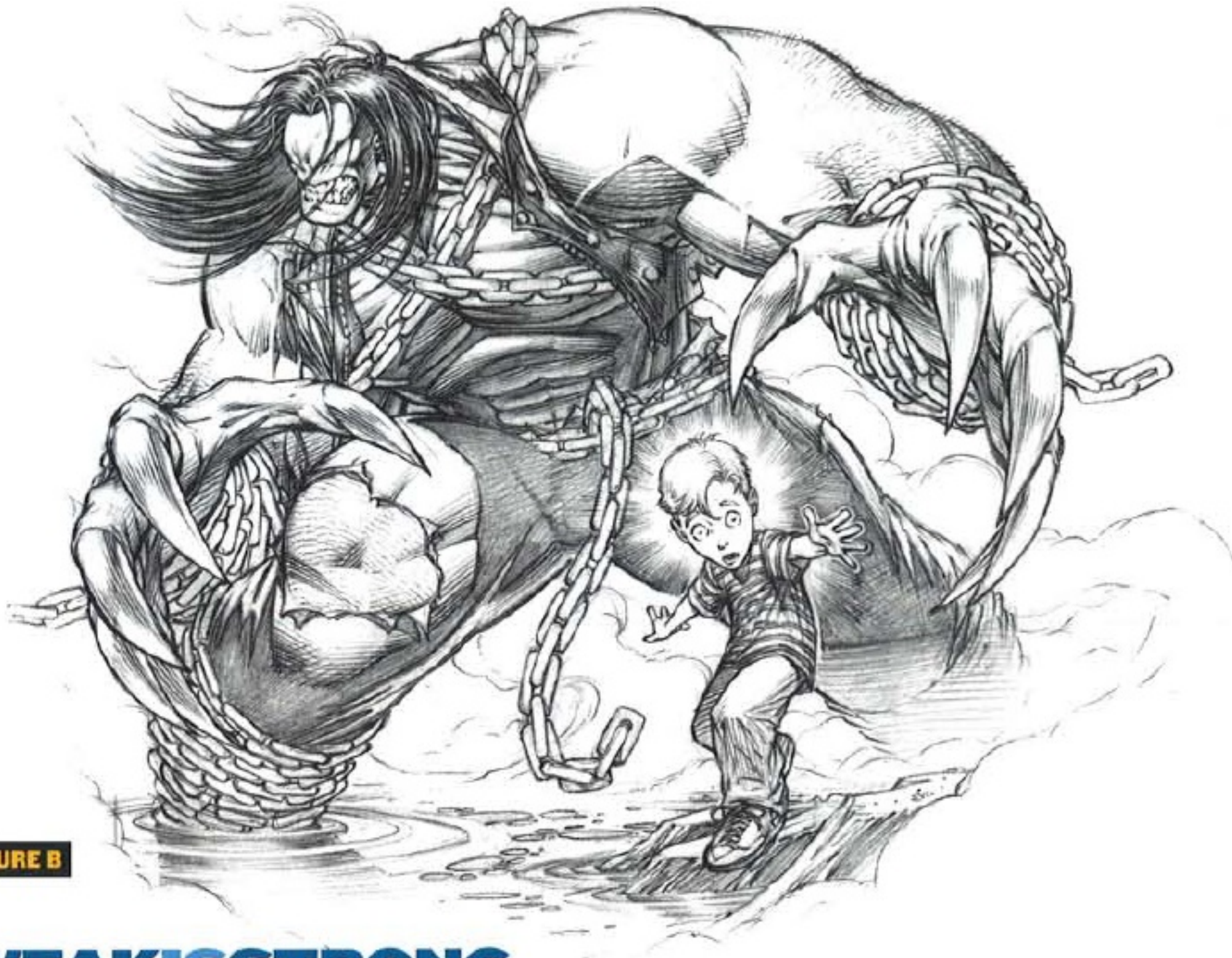


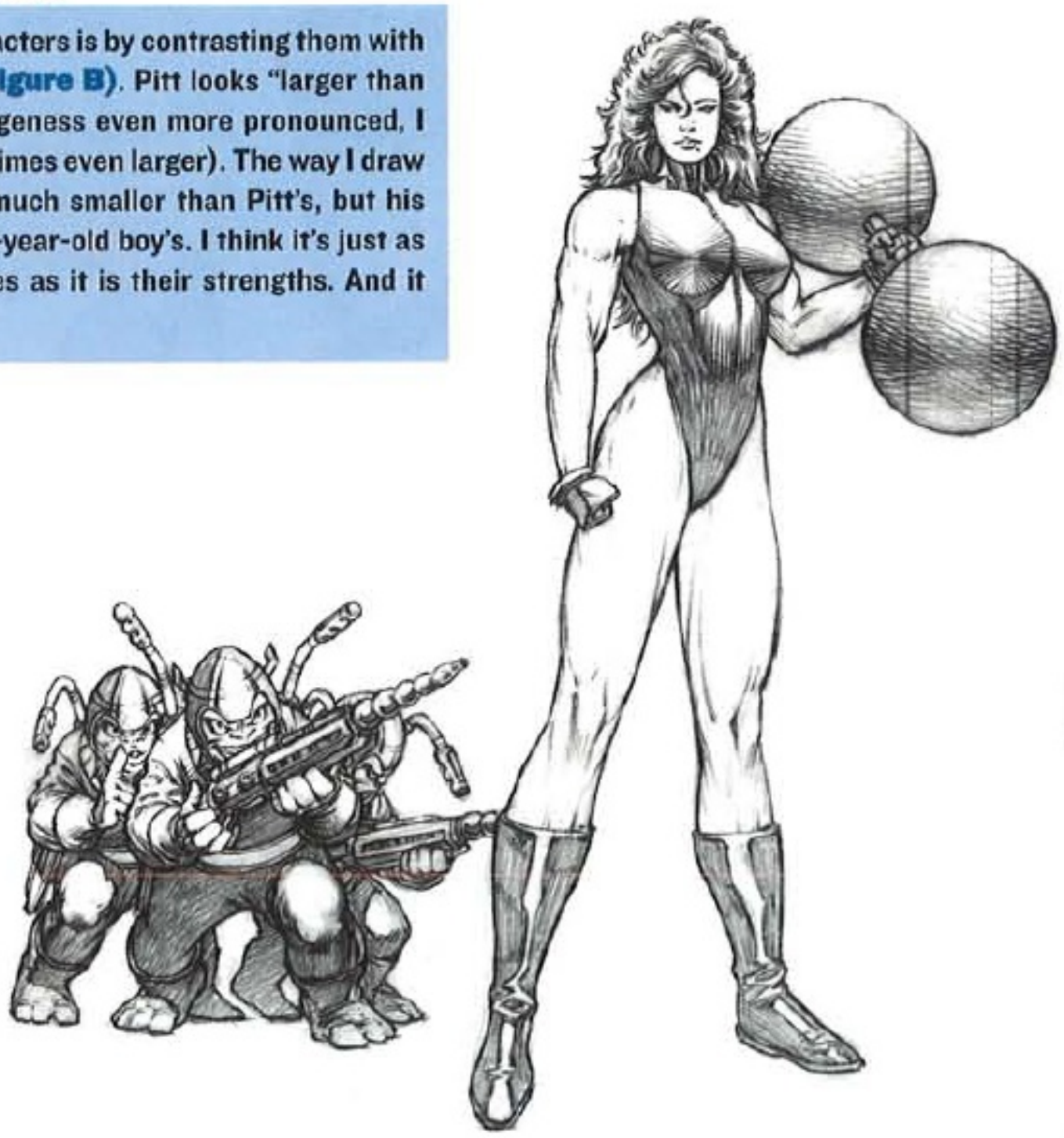
FIGURE B

## WEAKISSTRONG

A good way to establish the size of your characters is by contrasting them with others of totally different size and shape (**Figure B**). Pitt looks "larger than life" next to little Timmy! To make Pitt's hugeness even more pronounced, I draw his arms as large as his legs (and sometimes even larger). The way I draw young Timmy Bracken, his head isn't that much smaller than Pitt's, but his body is probably smaller than the average 8-year-old boy's. I think it's just as much fun exaggerating a character's frailties as it is their strengths. And it certainly helps build a contrast.

## BIGBABE

She-Hulk is heavy, weighing in at about 400 lbs. and towering at some 7 feet tall (7'4" on a good hair day). To emphasize her size and power, I've given her almost masculine-looking arms and legs, but retained the characteristic curves of a female, or in this case, of a super-model. In contrast, the Toadmen are much, much smaller characters. Their heads, hands and feet are balanced in proportion to each other, but their arms and legs are too short in comparison, which makes them pretty funny-looking, especially next to Shulkie.



## MONSTERMASH

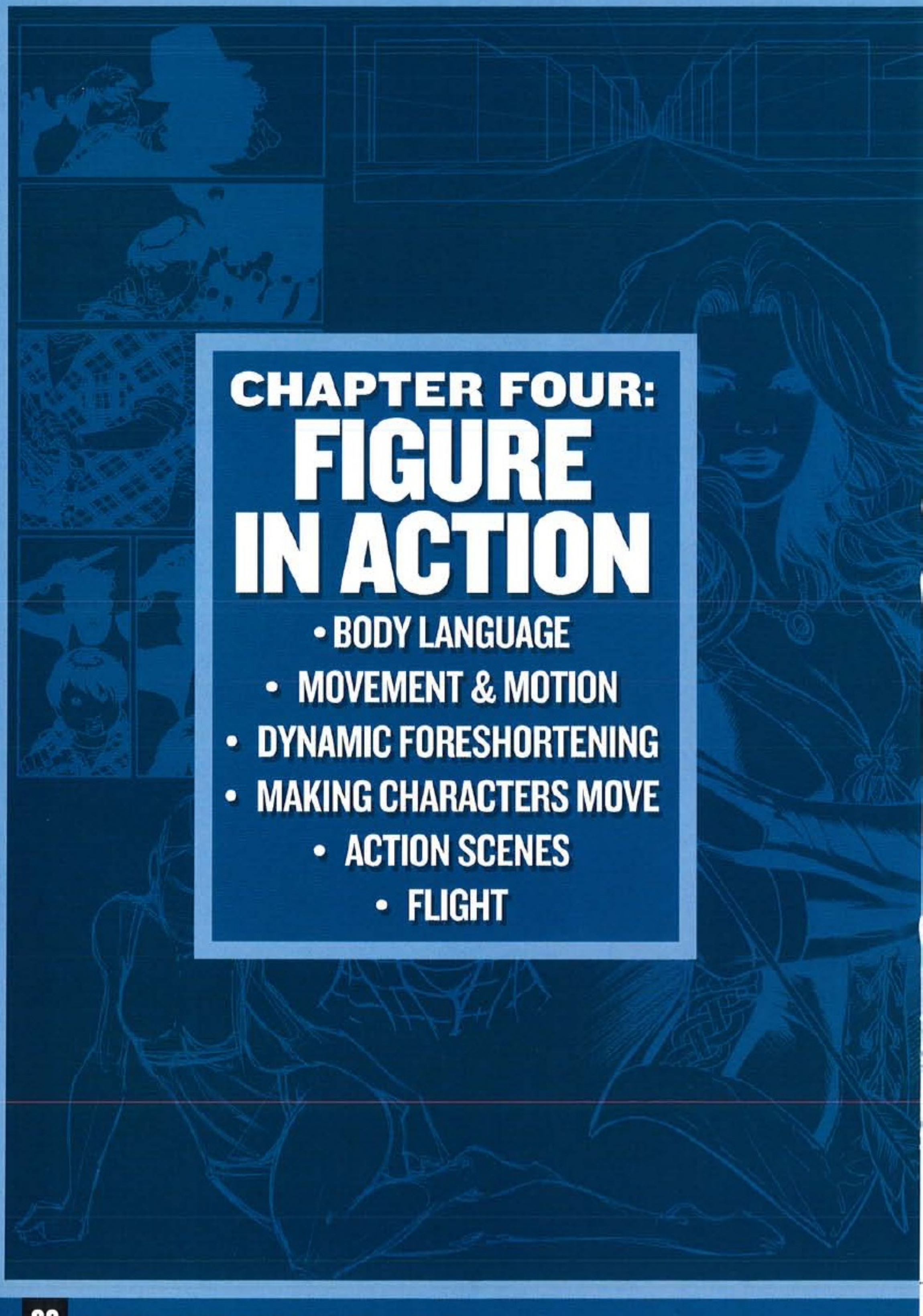
One of the things I really like about drawing comics is creating monsters from scratch; you can go nuts with proportions! If you're drawing a creature and creating your own monster, you could draw it 30 feet tall with eyes the size of car tires! Just remember, it's very important to keep the size of established characters consistent relative to the size of others around them. Take the Thing in the example to the right. You know he's a pretty big guy, so pitting him against this creature just shows how insanely huge it is!

## CREATIVESPIN

The Hulk dwarfs his wife, Betty Banner, in size. In this illustration, I've given the Green Goliath very large hands and feet to make their proportion differences more obvious. To take this a step further, I've drawn veins and tendons on his arms to give him a body resonating with power, even though he's in a relaxed position. An artist may choose to take creative license when drawing characters, but when it comes to drawing "real" people, I like to use realistic (or at least believable) proportions.

**I RECOMMEND** hunting down some reference books on drawing realistic proportions—check your local library, comic shop or bookstore. Once you've studied, practiced and learned the basics, your only limits will be your own talent and imagination. Have fun!

*Dale Keown's pencils can be seen on proportionally cool books like Marvel's* Incredible Hulk, *Top Cow's* The Darkness *and his creator-owned property,* Pitt.

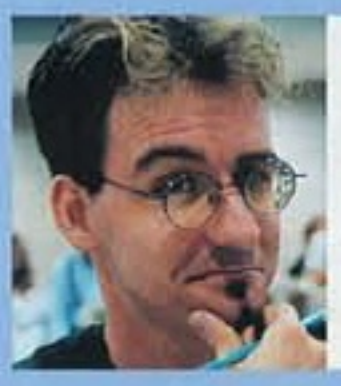


# CHAPTER FOUR: FIGURE IN ACTION

- BODY LANGUAGE
- MOVEMENT & MOTION
- DYNAMIC FORESHORTENING
- MAKING CHARACTERS MOVE
- ACTION SCENES
- FLIGHT

# BODY LANGUAGE

BY MATT HALEY



Body language is one of the most misunderstood parts of the drawing process. I know some of you out there are thinking, "Just draw a guy punching another guy, and you're done!" But it's not that simple. The term "body language" refers to the pose one's body adopts to convey a particular attitude or emotion. It's something we all do every day, consciously or not.

In the following pages, I'm going to show you just how to "pose" your characters so they seem a little more believable. Ideally, you want the reader to understand what's happening without reading the word balloons, and an evocative pose can really pull the reader in! Now, let's get into trouble, baby...

## PERFECTPOSTURE

A good, believable pose should tell the audience just what mood your character's in and what he intends to do. A bad pose, on the other hand, can make your character look ridiculous! Take poor Hawkeye here (Figure A). He needs a chiropractor! He doesn't look heroic, he looks uncomfortable. Look at how his back is arched and how stiffly his arms are held. It's hard to take him seriously.

On the other hand, Captain America looks confident, heroic and believable (Figure B). Even though he's standing still, he looks as if he might spring into action at any moment. Notice how it's not just the calm, self-assured look on his face, but his overall pose that tells us who he is. His arms are away from his body slightly (telling us he's ready for anything), his fists are clenched (but relaxed) and he's moving forward (to face whatever evils the writer throws at him), ready to kick Nazi butt!

FIGURE A

FIGURE B

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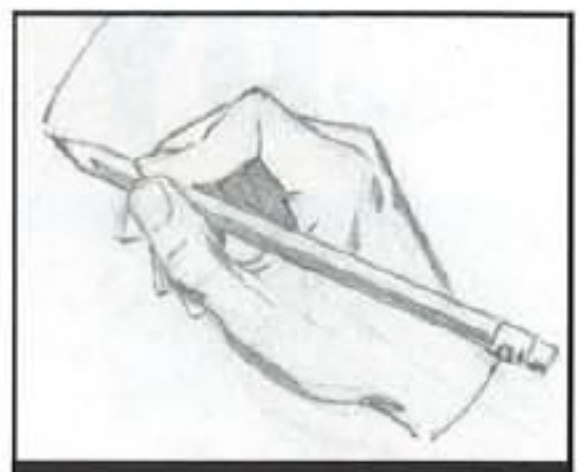
# BODYLANGUAGE

## GETAGRIP

One of the most important things I learned about drawing good body language was how to hold the pencil! For years, I'd been trying to sketch my basic drawings with a firm grip meant for rendering, resulting in stiff, unnatural-looking poses. Once I was shown how to use a light, "sketching" grip when breaking down a figure, my drawings suddenly became lifelike and natural! This sketching grip allows you to use the whole arm to create broad, sweeping lines. Try it.

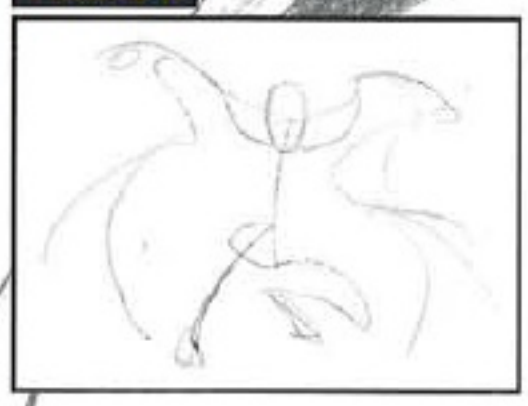
LIGHT SKETCH GRIP



FIRM RENDERING GRIP

FIGURE C

FIGURE D





## STRIKEAPOSE

No matter what emotion you're trying to convey, you should always break down your figure. Here's how I ensure the most lifelike pose. First, I choose the attitude I want the character to convey. Let's say I want to draw a menacing-looking Moon Knight. "Menacing" brings to mind an image of Dracula, especially when applying it to a night-time character like Moon Knight, but since he's a superhero, Moon Knight also needs to be dynamic.

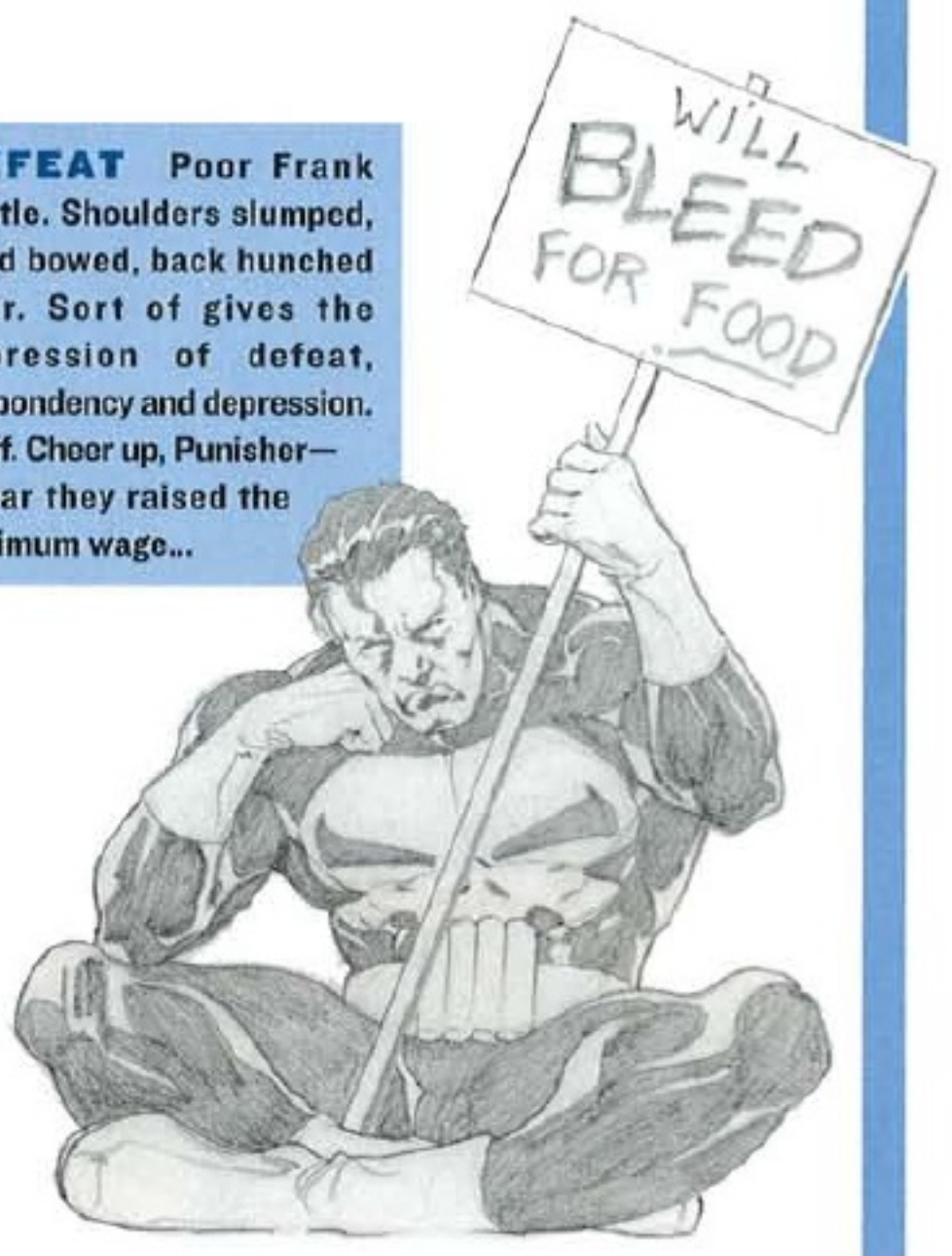
In the first sketch (**Figure C**), I draw the basic line for his spine, head, arms and legs. But I realize his left leg needs a more dynamic angle, so I change it and add the cape (**Figure D**), which helps add motion to the figure. Now here's the key: I sketch the pose as fast as I can, drawing only the lines needed to "read" the pose. Once I'm satisfied that the pose conveys the attitude I want, I start drawing Moon Knight's body over my initial sketch, still using the "sketching" grip. I try not to use the "rendering" grip until I start to draw details like his hands and face. That way, the figure will retain the menacing attitude I want without stiffening up.

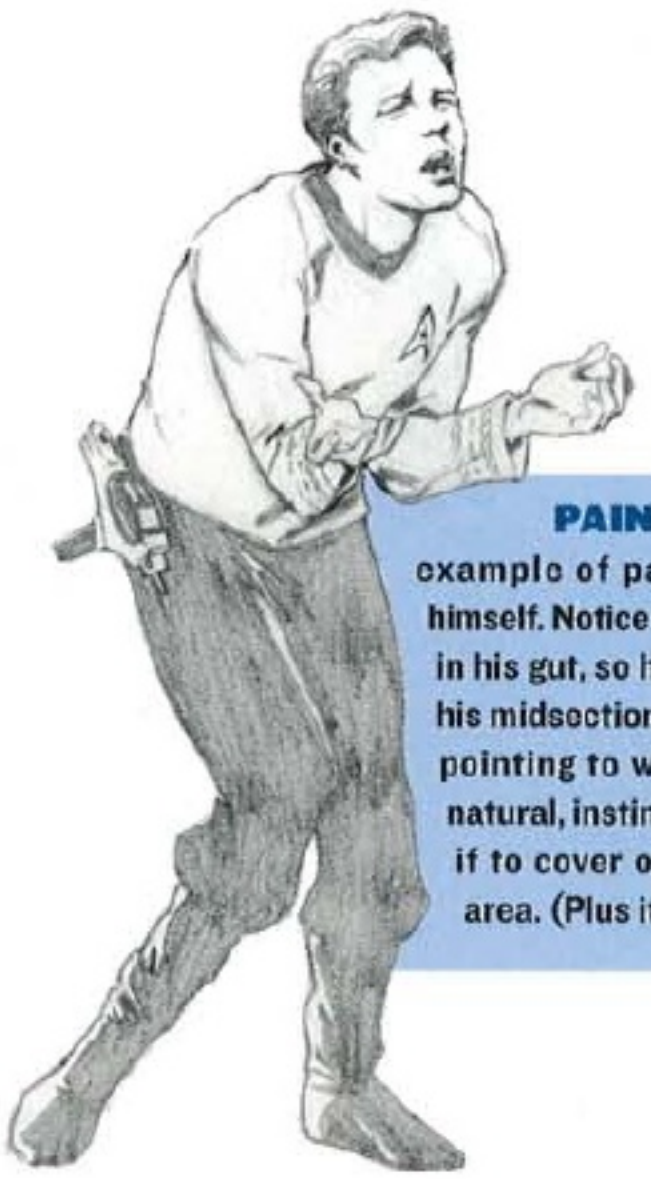
# SOEMOTIONALBABY

Body language can convey a number of different emotions. Everything from love to shock to pain can be expressed through your movements. Here are a few examples to get you thinking about just what your body's trying to say.

**LOVE** The pose Black Cat's striking here is the typical pose for a girl in love. Her hands clasped over one shoulder, head tilted towards the object of her affection, and one foot swept back, all seem to say, "I'm in love!"

**DEFEAT** Poor Frank Castle. Shoulders slumped, head bowed, back hunched over. Sort of gives the impression of defeat, despondency and depression. Sniff. Cheer up, Punisher—I hear they raised the minimum wage...



**PAIN** I can't think of a better example of pain than Captain Kirk himself. Notice that the pain seems to be in his gut, so his body is folded around his midsection, with his elbows almost pointing to where it hurts. This is a natural, instinctive reaction to pain, as if to cover or protect the offending area. (Plus it looks great on camera!)

**IMPATIENCE** Here's a typical pose for impatience—arms crossed, foot tapping. Looks like someone's a little late for a date!

**SURPRISE** Surprise? That's simple, right? Not so fast! What if your character is wearing a full-face mask, like Spidey? Sure, you could cheat and have his eyeholes open wide, but let's say they're actually stitched onto his mask and can't move. Now you have to use body language to tell the story.

# BODYLANGUAGE

## WHERETHEGIRLSARE

All right, listen up, 'cause I'm only going to say this once! (Ahem) **WOMEN HAVE SPINES.** Yep, just like real people! They hardly ever stand (well, float) like Mary Jane Watson here (**Figure E**). Man, that looks painful...and what the heck is she standing on? I know you want your female characters to be appealing, guys, but just because your favorite artist draws his female character in the same "sexy-swimsuit pose" whether she's fighting demons or burning toast doesn't mean you have to!

With a character like She-Hulk (**Figure F**), for example, you have to depict her as strong, courageous, able and, of course, beautiful. The way she's standing—balanced, poised, with a slight tilt to the head as she looks at us over her shoulder—tells us a lot more about her than a ripped T-shirt ever could. (And hey, this example also shows how to make a woman look appealing without having to show her chest!) Just remember to treat your female characters like real people instead of swimsuit images, and they'll be a lot more memorable!

FIGURE E

FIGURE F

**I COULD GO ON FOR PAGES** about the many different emotions that body language displays, but unfortunately I just don't have the room. So don't forget that ultimately, the best poses come from life—watch other people and sketch them! For a perspective on the use of body language from a master, track down Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art* or any work by Alex Toth and Jack Kirby (Toth being subtle and Kirby being ultra-dynamic). Whether you draw for a living or just as a hobby, giving your characters convincing body language will make the difference between an ordinary picture and an unforgettable work of art!

*Matt Haley speaks to the fans with body language in DC's* Birds of Prey *and the Superman found in Jerry Seinfeld's American Express ads.*

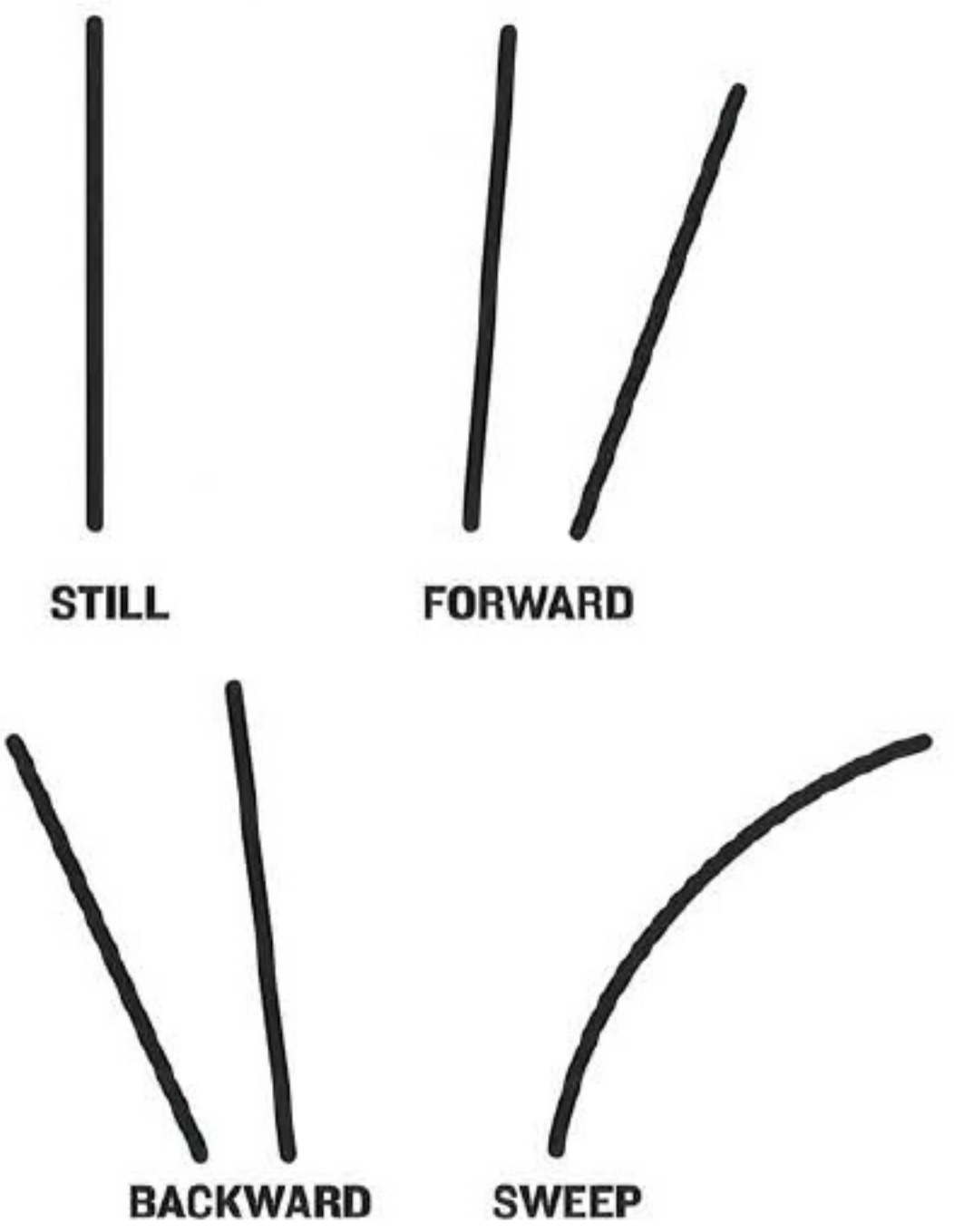
# MOVEMENT & MOTION

BY BART SEARS

Hello there! We're going to talk about how to create the feeling of life in your drawings by the use of movement and motion. You must remember that even when someone or something is at rest (standing still), it is moving and alive. You have to breathe this life into the things that you draw, and not just with speed lines and effects, but with actual motion drawn into the people (or whatever) you illustrate. So, bear with me. There are some relatively simple rules and guidelines to follow that can help you learn how to capture movement in immobile, two-dimensional drawings. Let's get on with it!

## LINEUP!

The simplest way to start to create motion in figures, or whatever's moving, is with the center line. The center line is the line drawn through the center of a figure, following the line of the backbone, which describes the general action of that figure. Take a look at the center lines, which can, from this point onward, also be referred to as action lines, that I have drawn to the right. Notice that a line drawn parallel to a border, or to the side or bottom of the page, creates a feeling of stillness or no motion. Note that if you tip this line forward or backward, even very slightly, you start to create movement. Now look at the last action lines drawn below...the one labeled SWEEP. This type of center line, alone and in conjunction with its relations, is responsible for most, if not all, of those pulse-pounding fight scenes that everyone really loves in their favorite comics. Sweeping action lines are the most noticeable, and the easiest to execute, because the actions they generally describe are of a grossly exaggerated kind. As in acting (I believe, anyway), it is always easier to draw (or play) characters acting larger than life than it is to draw (or play) the characters whose movements and mannerisms are of a subtler nature. Therefore, we will start with the big, sweeping action lines.



In the illustration to the left, notice how the center line, which is tilted slightly backwards, creates a feeling of the character snatching her head back, away from something or in reaction to something. Center lines are the basics of action.

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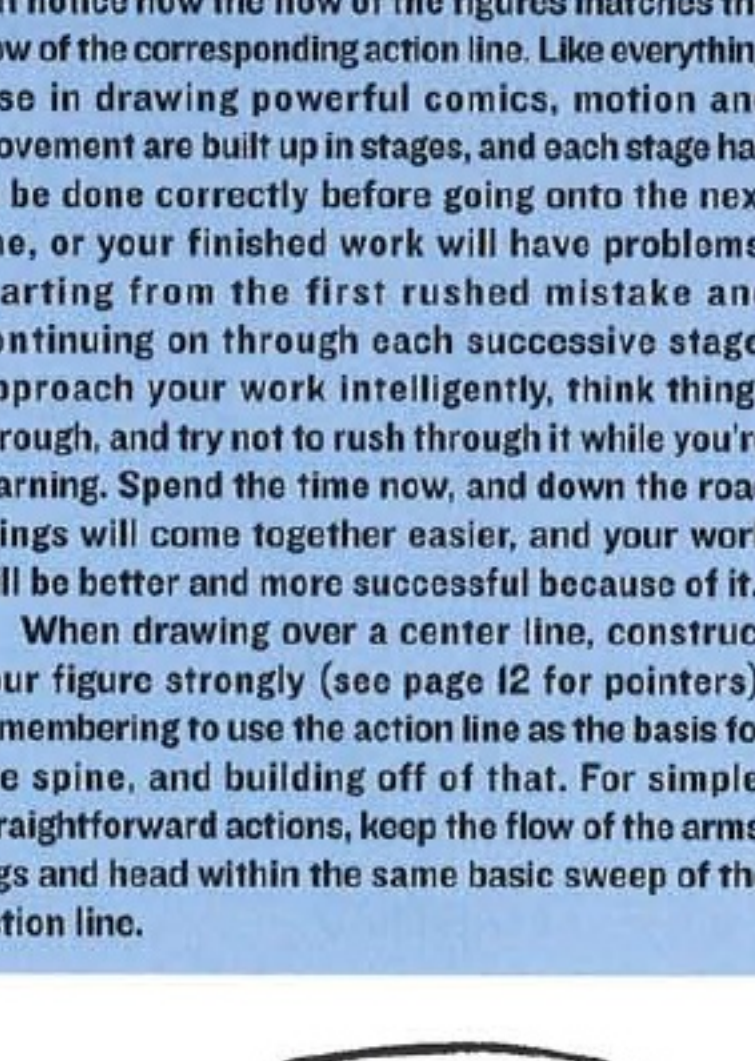
# MOVEMENT&MOTION

## ACTIONFIGURES

Now that we've taken a look at center lines, let's see how they translate into figures. Here are a couple of simple sweeping action lines, and next to them are a couple of figures drawn using these action lines as center lines (those two words are virtually interchangeable). Take a good look at the figures. Obviously, there is more going on with them than a simple center line, which we'll get into shortly, but notice how the flow of the figures matches the flow of the corresponding action line. Like everything else in drawing powerful comics, motion and movement are built up in stages, and each stage has to be done correctly before going onto the next one, or your finished work will have problems, starting from the first rushed mistake and continuing on through each successive stage. Approach your work intelligently, think things through, and try not to rush through it while you're learning. Spend the time now, and down the road things will come together easier, and your work will be better and more successful because of it.

When drawing over a center line, construct your figure strongly (see page 12 for pointers), remembering to use the action line as the basis for the spine, and building off of that. For simple, straightforward actions, keep the flow of the arms, legs and head within the same basic sweep of the action line.



## TWISTED

To create even more motion within a figure, try twisting the torso. What that means is turning the shoulder line to an angle with the hip line, as better explained in the drawing to the left. The shoulder can dip towards the hip, but not too much. Remember, don't twist the shoulders to an angle of more than 45 degrees to the hips in any direction! By twisting the hips and shoulders, you create tension within a figure, which creates motion.

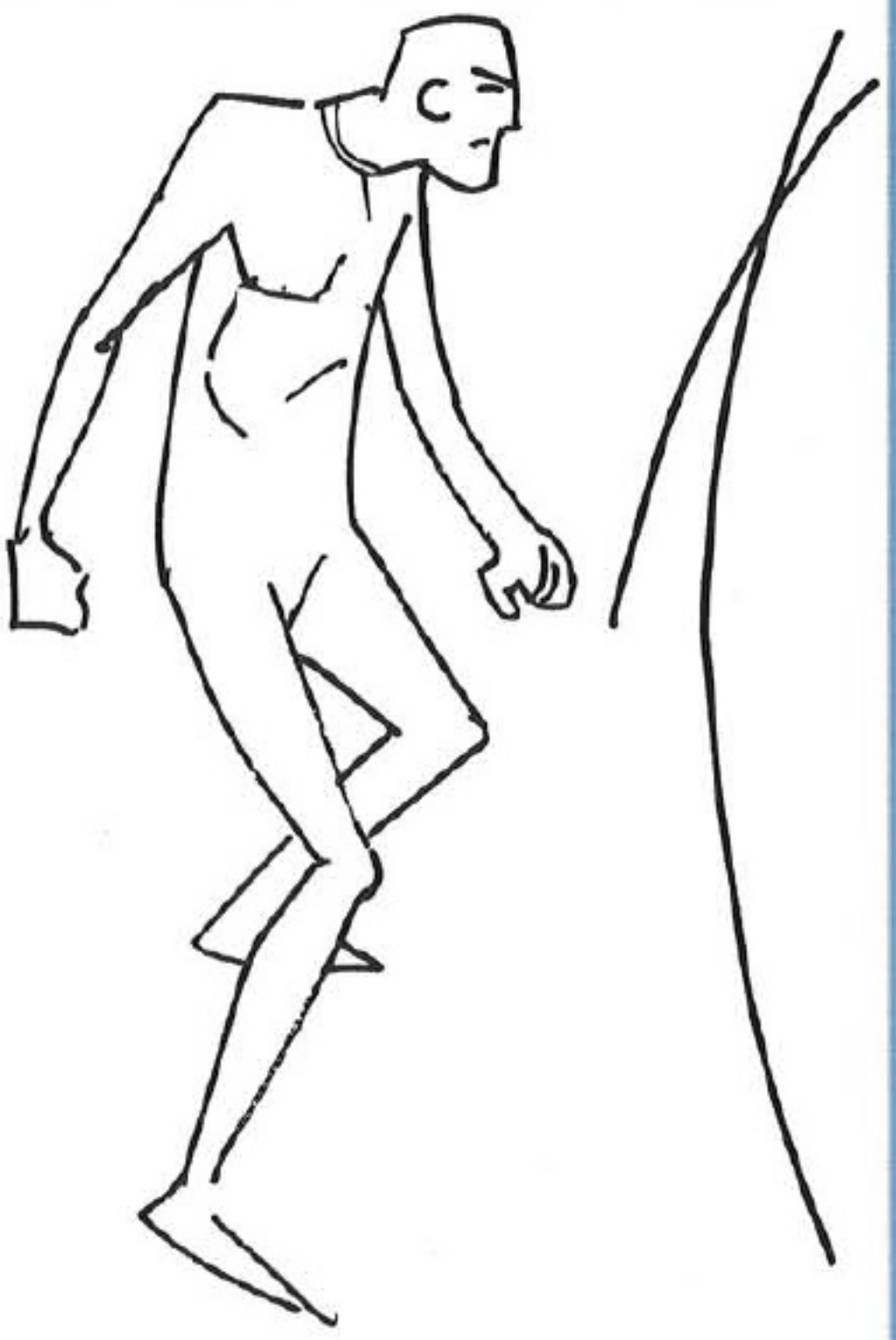
## OPPOSINGLINES

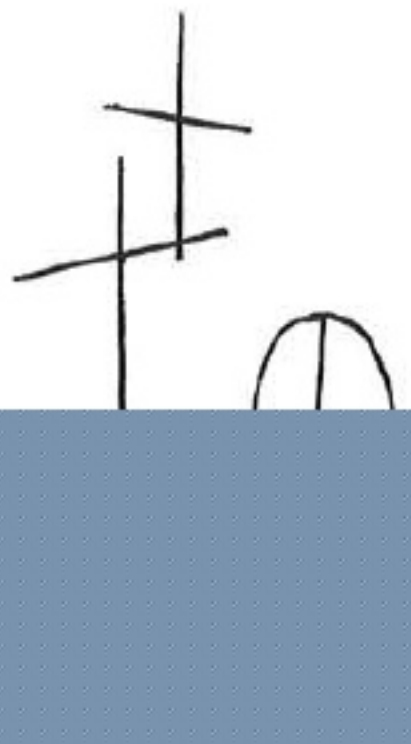
If it's true that parallel lines suggest no motion (and I believe it is), then opposing lines create motion. Look at the two action lines drawn to the right. Two simple opposing action lines, by their very nature, create force and tension (they don't even have to cross). Imagine a hero and villain locked in a titanic struggle far above the Earth—energy glittering wildly about them, the fate of world in the balance, their muscles rippling and surging with power, etc. Now, using these action lines, you can draw it!

# A LITTLE DOES MORE & MORE

Now we have to talk a little about the difficult part of movement and motion, the subtleties. Anyone sitting, laying, standing, hanging around, talking, watching TV, etc., is moving and has life and motion, even if it's only breathing. Even comic book characters have to appear to breathe. People aren't wooden statues. They slouch and shift and fidget all of the time, and so should your characters. You can make your characters real and alive by giving them motion, especially subtle motion. Creating subtle motion is just like creating those bold actions, but just tone it down. Instead of broad, sweeping, aggravated, opposing lines of action, draw smaller, straighter, more similar lines, closer to parallel action lines.

Look at the figure drawn to the right. He has motion and movement—not a lot, but still, he is obviously a living, breathing, two-dimensional drawing. Notice his center line, only slightly curved, almost parallel with the edge of the page, yet still implying motion. Also notice the gently sweeping line of the arm, not parallel, but also more a part of the center line than opposing it. Then, just to give it a little something extra, I thrust the head forward, giving purpose and intent to the movement, and perhaps suggesting a more action-filled movement to come.





To the left we have a quick angle line drawing and the quick figure using those action lines. That's the subtle use of opposing action li

# MAKING CHARACTERS MOVE

BY MIKE WIERINGO

Hey, all you artists out there. I've drawn a wide variety of characters, from Flash to the Fantastic Four—and one big thing they all have in common is they gotta move! They're all high-action heroes, so they give you lots of opportunity to explore ways to create "movement." This month, I'm going to share with you just how I like bringing life to the stuff I draw! Giving your characters the illusion of life is one of the most important elements of drawing comics. Not only does it help your storytelling and the believability of your characters, but it's just downright fun. The best way to learn how to draw motion, of course, is by watching it. Check out the people around you. Watch TV, especially sporting events like gymnastics. Basically, look everywhere. Now, with that said, let's get moving!

## MANONTHERUN

I've depicted a few ways to give Quicksilver his "speed" in flat-out running: mainly, there's speed lines. Lots of 'em! Speed lines are fun because you can make them follow the shape of the terrain your character's running on, and you can use them in perspective for dynamic effects! Notice how the lines coming out from Quicksilver make it seem like he's heading toward you. Throw in Quicksilver's speed trail, some dust being blown up in his wake, some rock and debris being swept along, as well as a couple of pieces of paper being whipped about, and you've got one supersonic speedster!

## FOLLOWTHE BOUNCING SUPERHERO

One of the coolest ways to show the incredible combination of speed and agility Spider-Man has is through multiple images! You can show Spidey bouncing, twisting and turning in any way you can imagine. Just draw smooth transitions between the moves (as if you were an animator). Making the images flow from one to another will help Web-head look even more fluid and graceful. Multiple images are also a great way to show Quicksilver's blazing speed as he super-speed-punches some overgrown baddie into submission!

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## WATERWORLD

Even though there's probably very little pure oxygen to produce bubbles at the depths Namor hangs out (and rumbles) in, it's fun to take a little artistic license and use them to indicate just where ol' Sub-Mariner's coming from. They also create a sense of the water being stirred up around him as he rockets on through! Notice how the bubbles from his hand to his head help show movement in his right arm, while the smaller bubbles trailing off by his feet project the image that he's swimming towards us. Some schools of fish tagging along help with the effect!

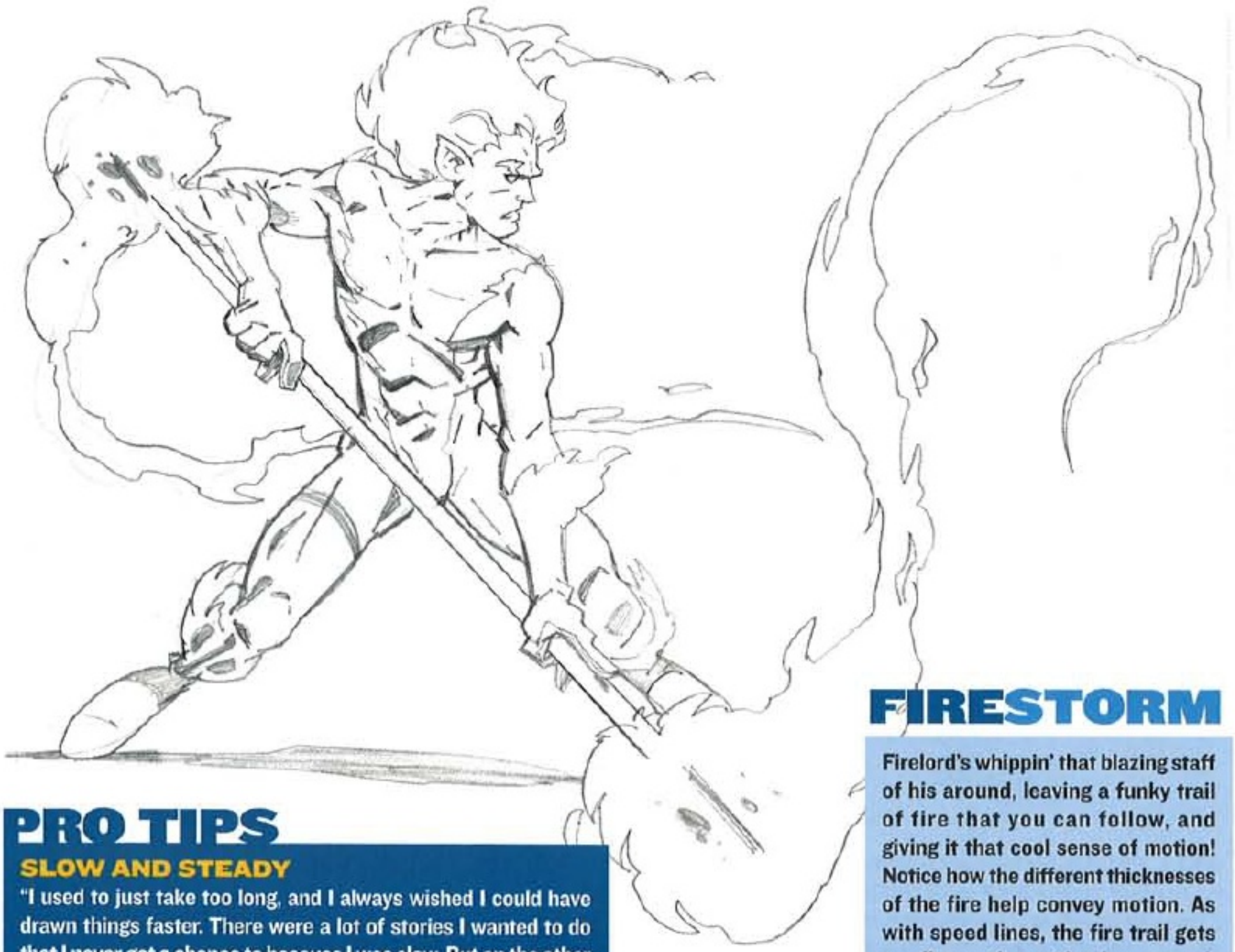
## EARTHMOVER

Good old *terra firma* (That's "solid ground" for you folks without dictionaries!) comes in handy, especially when you're drawing huge, powerhouse characters like the Hulk here. As the Green Goliath comes in for a landing (Imagine a huge "THOOOM" sound effect behind him!), he kicks up massive amounts of dust and earth. Drawing several chunks of dirt and rock bouncing off the ground gives a great impression that the Hulkster landed with a tremendous impact! His squatting position also adds to the dynamic of the figure and shows the realism of gravity pulling him down.

It's also fun to draw one big powerhouse knocking another powerhouse across the ground. Show his back and rear end (the one that got pounded, that is) grinding up chunks of rock, dirt and dust as his bruised ego (and butt) drag across the ground!

## AIRWALKER

You can use air, or more specifically wind, to create some really cool, lively effects. Capes are great for this type of thing! You can liven up even the most static of scenes with capes and wind—like this Moon Knight I drew! He's tensed up, stalking, ready to strike...but he's not doin' a lotta moving. So how do you add some motion? Simple. Make his cape billow ominously in the night air. Toss in some blowin' papers and some cool bats, and you've got one awesome scene!



## PRO TIPS

### SLOW AND STEADY

"I used to just take too long, and I always wished I could have drawn things faster. There were a lot of stories I wanted to do that I never got a chance to because I was slow. But on the other hand, the fact that I was careful and very story-conscious and conscientious about making it as good as I possibly could had people remembering my stuff." —John Romita Sr., *Amazing Spider-Man*

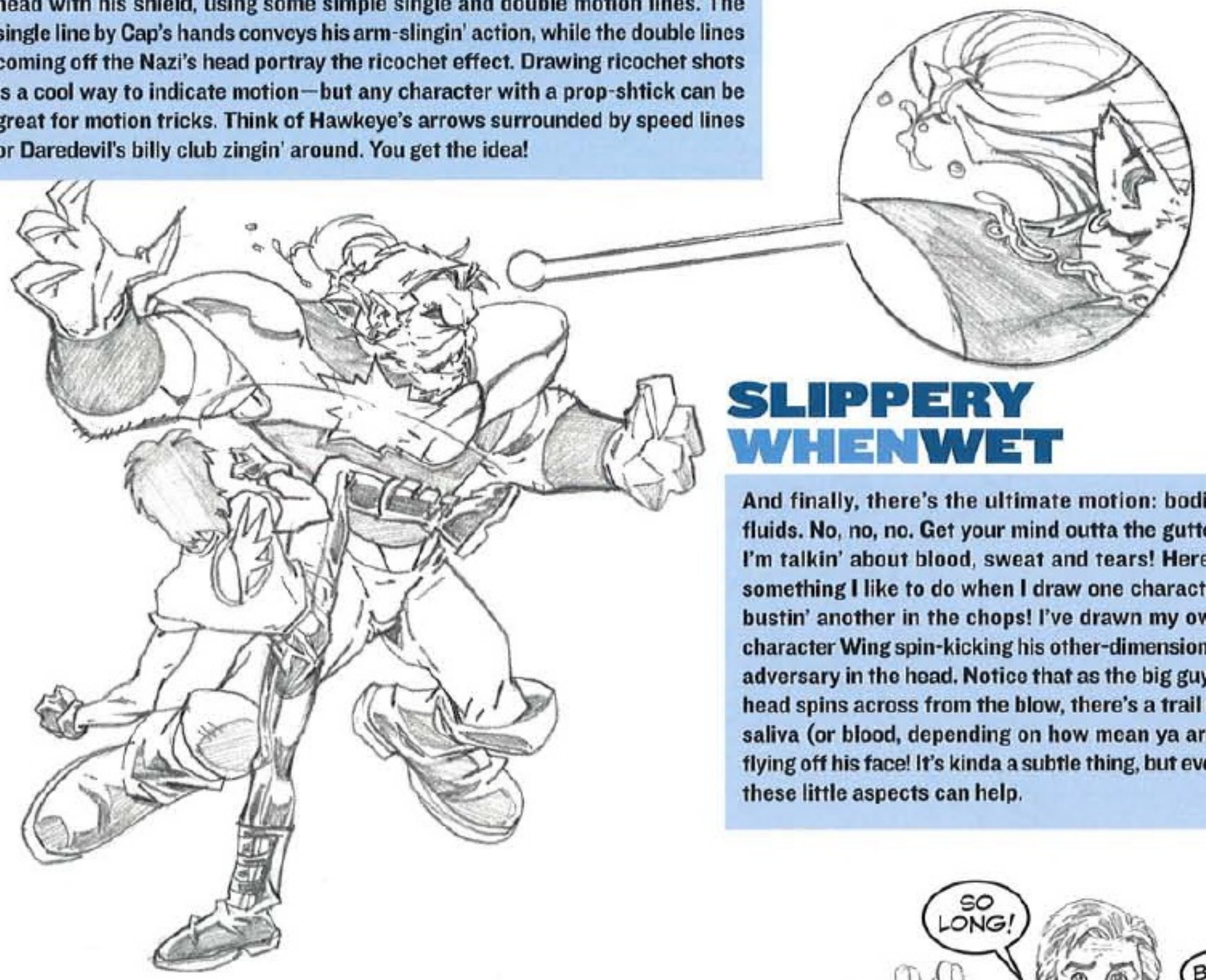
## FIRESTORM

Firelord's whippin' that blazing staff of his around, leaving a funky trail of fire that you can follow, and giving it that cool sense of motion! Notice how the different thicknesses of the fire help convey motion. As with speed lines, the fire trail gets smaller as the motion has passed. You can do the same thing with the Human Torch and his fire trail when he's flying!

# MAKINGCHARACTERSMOVE

## PROPSINMOTION

Just as I've already shown you with Firelord's staff, props can play a big role in motion, too! Here, I've drawn a shot of Captain America bustin' a Nazi upside the head with his shield, using some simple single and double motion lines. The single line by Cap's hands conveys his arm-slingin' action, while the double lines coming off the Nazi's head portray the ricochet effect. Drawing ricochet shots is a cool way to indicate motion—but any character with a prop-shtick can be great for motion tricks. Think of Hawkeye's arrows surrounded by speed lines or Daredevil's billy club zingin' around. You get the idea!



## SLIPPERY WHENWET

And finally, there's the ultimate motion: bodily fluids. No, no, no. Get your mind outta the gutter. I'm talkin' about blood, sweat and tears! Here's something I like to do when I draw one character bustin' another in the chops! I've drawn my own character Wing spin-kicking his other-dimensional adversary in the head. Notice that as the big guy's head spins across from the blow, there's a trail of saliva (or blood, depending on how mean ya are) flying off his face! It's kinda a subtle thing, but even these little aspects can help.

**WELL FOLKS,** it's been great sharing some of my "tricks" with you! Unfortunately, due to space constraints, I could only present a few examples. But remember, just think of your characters as always moving, always in motion...you're just freezing them at one specific point where as much stuff is happenin' as you've got the gumption (or time) to squeeze in!

---

*Mike Wieringo's fluid pencils have graced the pages of Marvel's* Fantastic Four, *DC's* Flash *and his creator-owned project,* Tellos.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PART 5

# ACTION SCENES

BY JIM LEE

PHOTO: PAUL SCHERALDI

One of the chief defining characteristics of superhero comics is action. After all, nobody likes a dull fight scene. So, as artists, it's our job to fully bring forth intense dynamics. It's not as easy as it sounds, though, since we're constantly torn between maintaining a sense of reality and making a scene bigger and bolder than it could ever possibly be.

Now, there are many ways to get the most excitement out of your figurework. But given the space I have in this column, I've narrowed it down to a few important ones that can help bring more zing to your work. So grab a pencil, hit your board and let's go!

## STORY

# FLIGHT

## WINGEDWONDER

With Angel (**Figure C**), we get the determination of Vision in **Figure A**, but with much more grace—the arch in his back and his open hands tell us he's flying quickly, with purpose, but isn't out to punch the next thing he sees.

FIGURE C

## LIFTOFFANDLANDING

Composition is key in creating the illusion that a character is floating above the ground. To indicate liftoff, you must show the environment from which the character is leaving and draw the figure above the ground of that environment, letting us know he's already in midair. Check out Thor's powerful, determined liftoff (**Figure D**). We see that he's flying up from a rooftop (the shadow on the building's edge tells us he's not on it, but apart from it). His cape and hair billow behind him, showing us the rush of air and his direction. And the fact that Thor is heading up towards the top of the page lets us know he's headed up towards the sky.

Now look at Thor landing (**Figure E**). Here, he almost looks like he's leaping down from a higher building. That's a very helpful key. A character landing has his or her weight behind him, and his body will bend appropriately. Unless it's the most graceful touchdown, a character should have some bend to his knees, arms and torso to clue us in on the pressure of his landing. Furthermore, his cape, hair and arms, all pointed towards the sky, let us know where he's coming from.

FIGURE D

FIGURE E

## SWINGINGMYWAY

Flying characters should be handled very differently from swinging characters, although some similarities remain. Note the position of the Human Torch (**Figure F**). He looks like he's gliding through the air, his head and outstretched arms and hands leading him with determination through the sky. Spider-Man, on the other hand, is swinging from building to building. He leads with his feet, and his arms are stretched out in both directions as he leaves one web behind to use another. He's held aloft not by any ability to float in the air, but by the delicate distribution of weight between his arms and legs, torso and head as he swings. He should look as though he could fall to his doom if his weblines were to suddenly disappear.

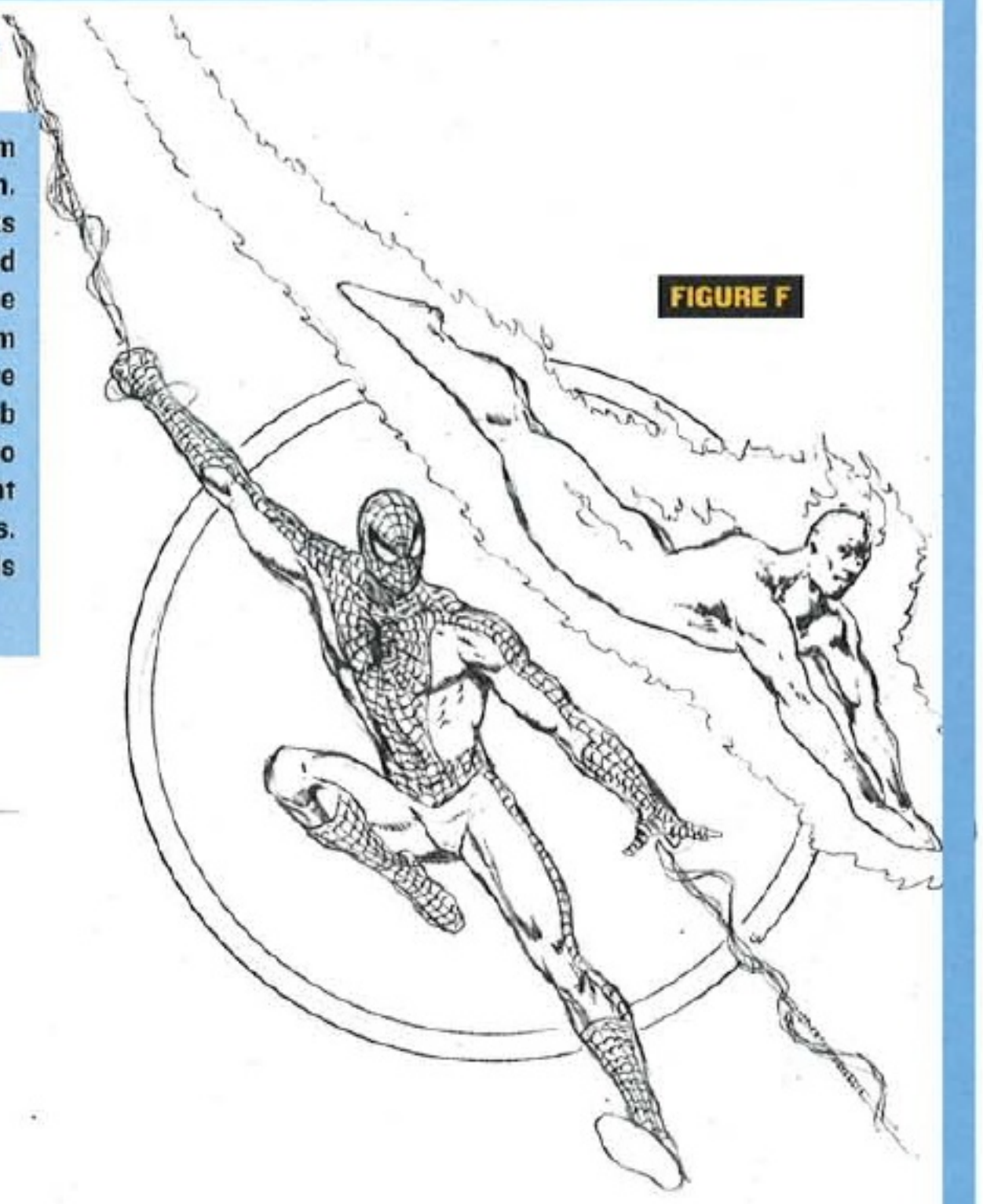


FIGURE F

## BREAKINGBORDERS

With Rogue here, we see another example of composition giving us the visual cues we need to believe she's flying—her outstretched arms, hair flying behind her and speed lines all indicate her direction, and the planetary background indicates her environment. Her arcing figure is bold enough to break through the panel borders. This final choice is one a lot of artists like to use, but it also leads to a common compositional mistake many artists use that destroy the illusion of flying...

## PRO TIPS

### COLLABORATE: GREAT!

"Personally, I've taken the biggest leaps of growth from collaborating—i.e., inking someone's pencils, someone inking my pencils, drawing from someone else's script, and so on. Remember that in a collaboration, it's important to respect everyone's contribution while simultaneously standing strong for your own efforts if you believe in what you're doing." —Mike Allred, *X-Statix*

# FLIGHT

## ANCHORSAWEIGH

One of the easiest ways to craft the illusion of flight in a comic book is to position the figure in the panel unattached to any panel borders. Notice how Warbird in **Figure G** seems to be floating in midair. This is because she has no anchor—that is, nothing attaches her to the panel border.

But in **Figure H**, Warbird's toes and forearm are cut off. Many artists draw figures that don't quite fit in the panel and cut them off at awkward points on their extremities. Not only are these bad composition choices, but connecting the figure to the panel border destroys the illusion that the figure is free-floating and, therefore, flying in midair.

FIGURE G

FIGURE H

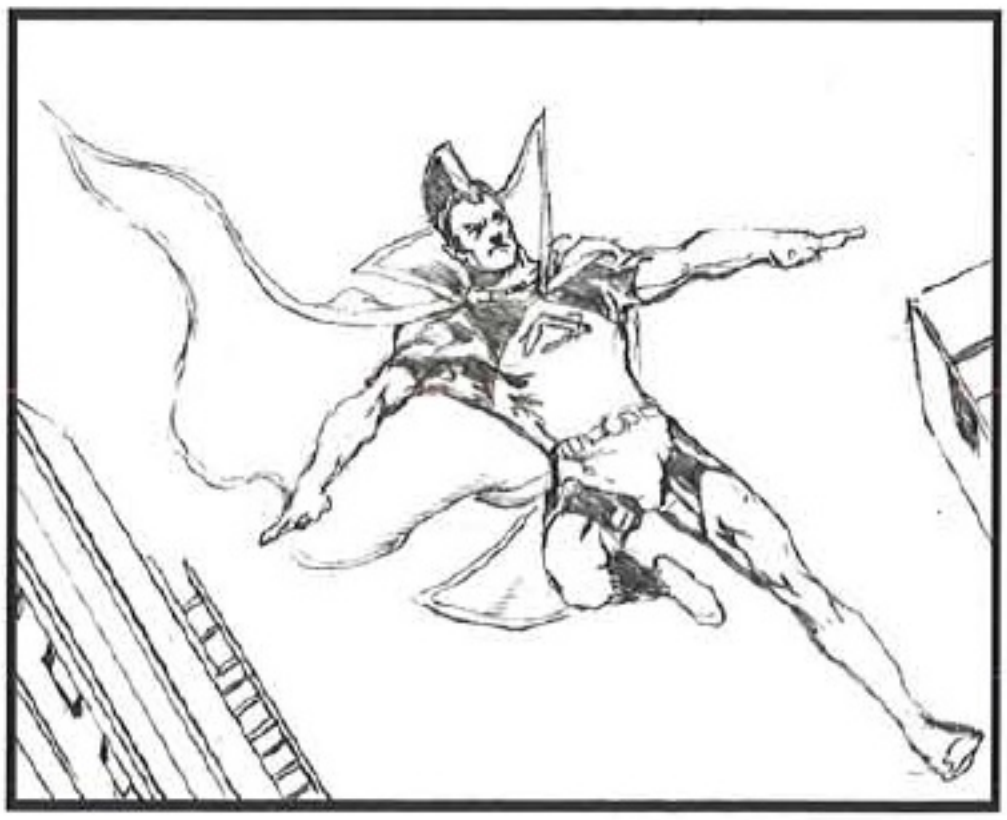
## THERIGHTFRAME

Composition is important in other ways here. In **Figure H**, Warbird is posed diagonally—always the best for dynamism in a panel. But she looks awkward, like she's leading with her leg and torso, not her head.

In **Figure G**, Warbird keeps her diagonal composition, but her body is more solidly posed. She looks like she's in control of her arms and muscles, not the other way around. Her head, twisted the opposite way of her legs, is still poised solidly on her shoulders. Even if she was to turn direction in midair, she looks in control.

## CAPETOWN

Here's another easy indicator of flight: A billowing cape, like Guardian's to the right, suggests the wind whipping through it, and helps indicate direction and motion. The more dynamic the cape, the more dynamic the figure and the composition (but don't go overboard, and don't connect the cape to the border).



## HAIRSPRAY

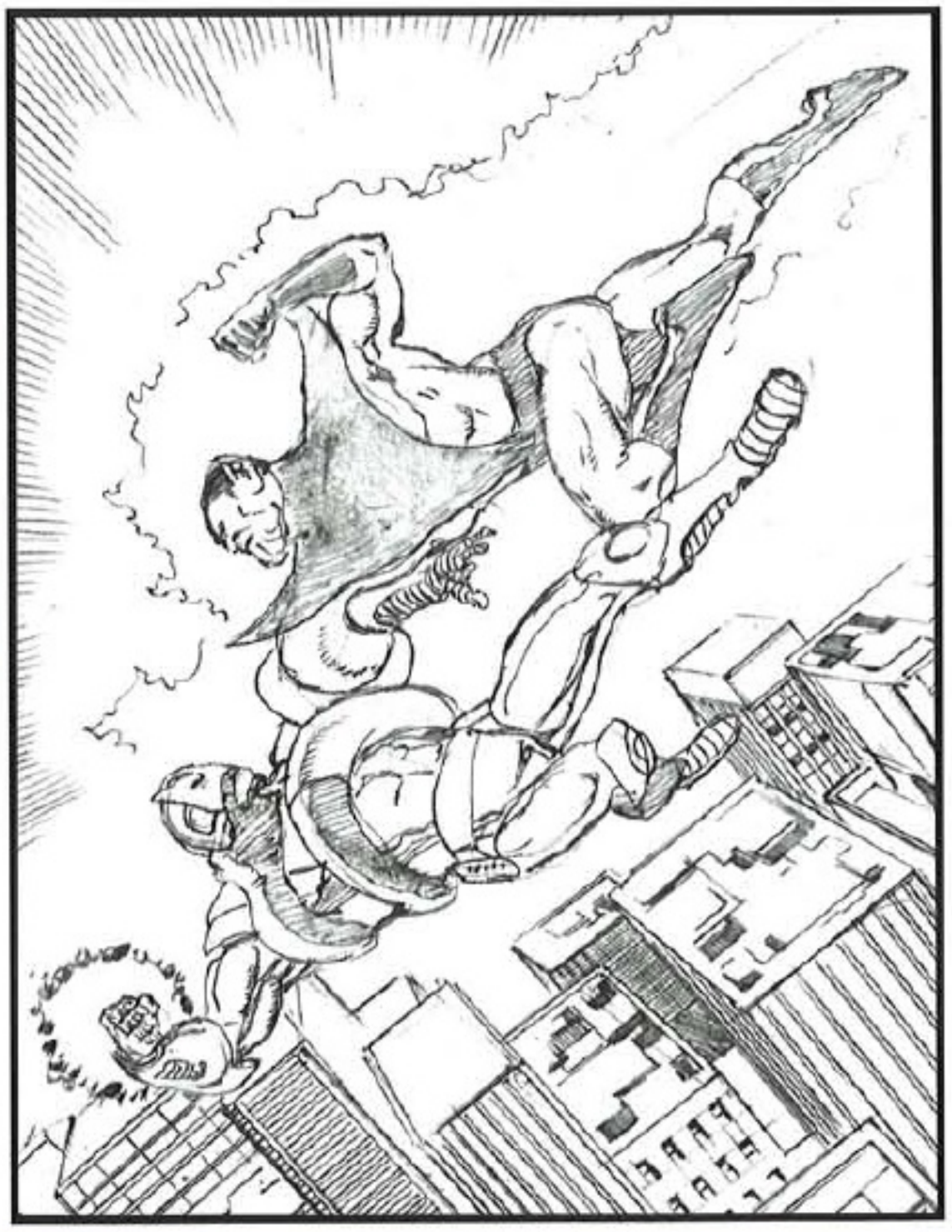
A character's hair is another great indicator that a character is flying, leaping or in motion. The wind pushing through She-Hulk's hair (right) indicates speed and direction, important considerations while crafting the illusion of motion.

## LITTLESWIMMERBOY

A great model for characters flying is characters swimming. The poses, angles, billowing hair, wind- (or water-) whipped cape, diagonal composition and the environment the character is in are all just as applicable to a swimming figure as they are to a flying one. Just something for you and Prince Namor (left) to think about.

## AERIALCOMBAT

What about two characters fighting while they're flying? The same rules apply. Composition is key—remove the figures from the panel borders to create the illusion they're floating in mid-air, like Iron Man and Super-Skrull. Create backgrounds now and then to let us know that the characters are not grounded and, in many cases, are flying hundreds of feet above the Earth. Keep diagonal lines in the panel to create a dynamic composition. And keep the figures' legs flung about—they should never look like they can stand on the ground the minute they're upright! They should look like they're in constant freefall.



**I HOPE** this was helpful and gets you started thinking about some ways to draw superheroes and their adversaries flying and fighting. I highly recommend a great book, Thomas Easley's *The Figure in Motion*, for great poses and some terrific figures in midair, apparently flying. Also look at any books of dancers with similar photography. They'll really get you thinking about what people would look like if they could really fly...and isn't that why we're in this business anyway, to make people believe just that? (W)

---

*Phil Jimenez has taken flight as both artist and writer in books like DC's* Wonder Woman *and DC/Vertigo's* Otherworld.

# CHAPTER FIVE:
# CREATE YOUR WORLD

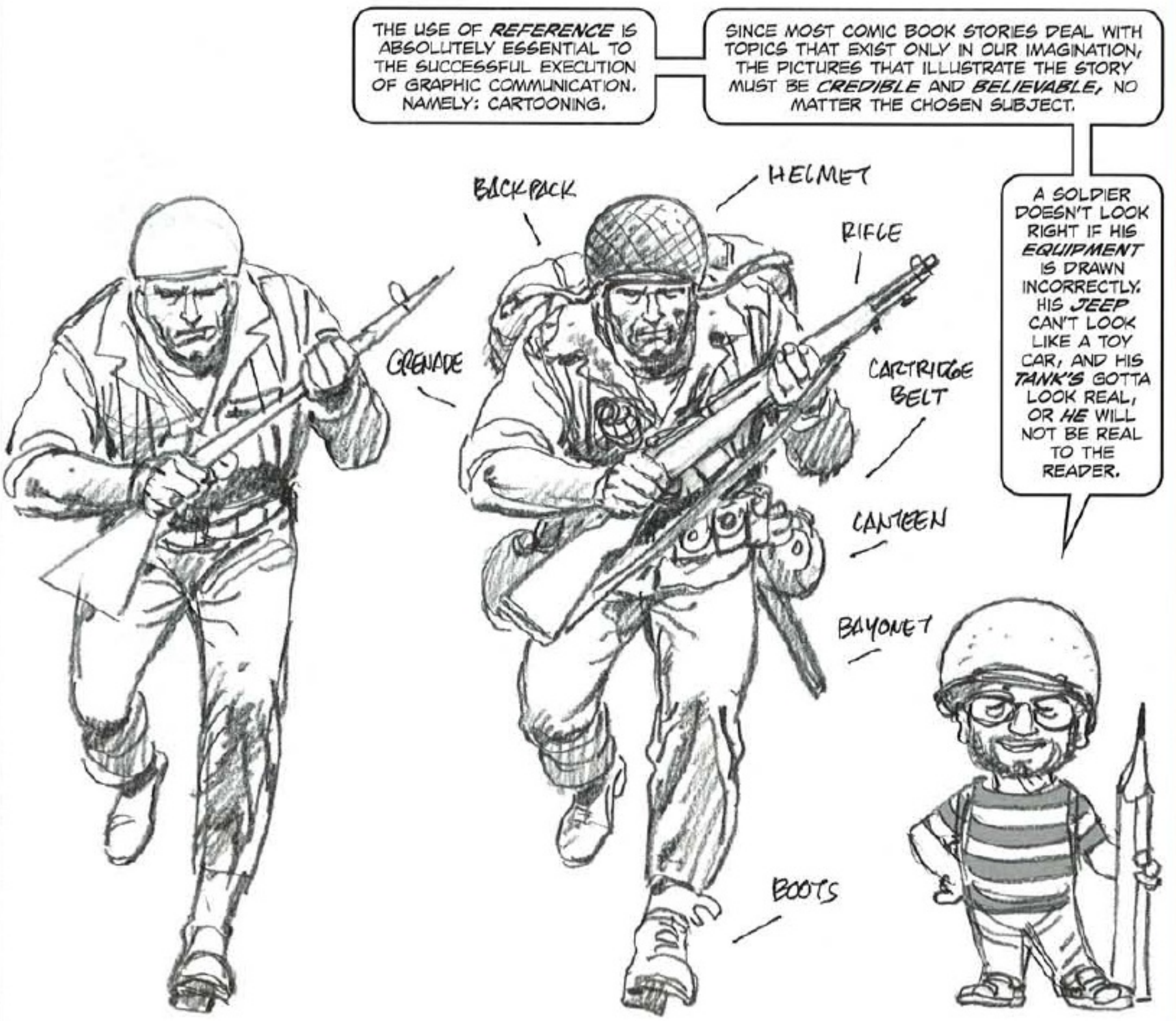
- REFERENCE
- PHOTO REFERENCE
- BACKGROUNDS
- SETTINGS
- TEXTURE
- METALLIC SURFACES
- VEHICLES

# REFERENCE

BY JOE KUBERT

Glad you were able to make it to this course. I hope you've been practicing your fundamental figure construction, perspective, anatomy and body language. I think it's important to remind you that *none* of these lessons are *easy*. Benefit derived depends on the effort you put into it. No one becomes a cartoonist as a result of *one* drawing. It takes time, patience, motivation and work. Making mistakes and *learning* from those mistakes. And drawing and drawing, and then drawing some more.

Stick to it! Keep at it. Your improvement is in exact ratio to the amount of the time you spend at drawing. *That's* the magic formula. Anyone can do it. All you gotta do is *work* at it.




Don't limit yourself to only one picture reference of the subject in need. You need views from all angles, not to be limited to a specific pose. If, for instance, your subject is dinosaurs, you have to know what the creature looked like from all angles. Having only one picture reference means drawing the same thing with no variations, because you don't know what the subject looks like from a different angle. When that happens, the reference is using you, instead of you using the reference.

PHOTO: PAUL SCHRADER

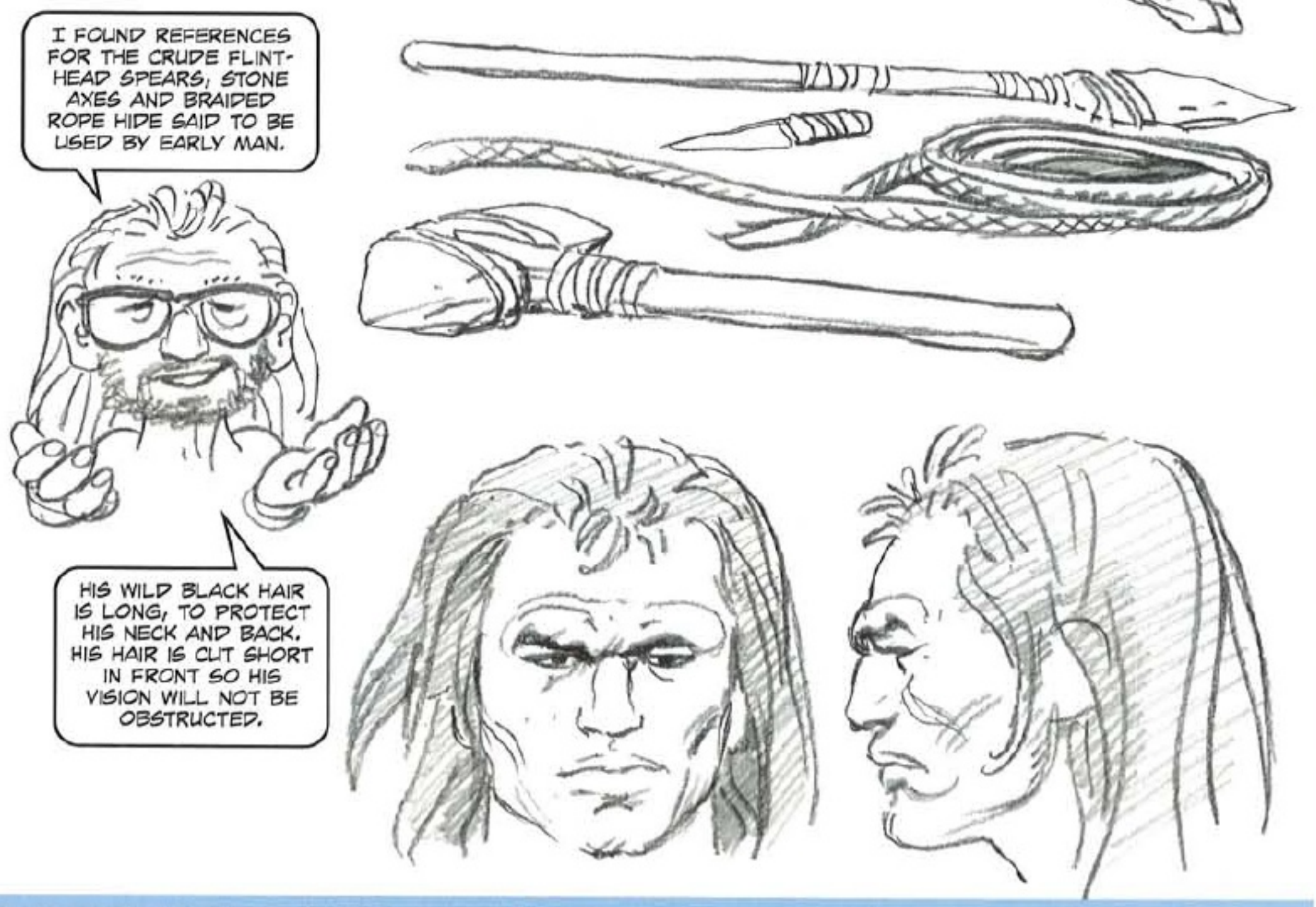
# REFERENCE

So—get as many pictures as you can, and make sure they're good references. Check the credentials of the dinosaur illustrations (the artists). There were very few cameras around at the time.

If possible, visit your local museums and do some sketches of the dinosaurs on exhibition. There are many good books containing well-researched illustrations. Study the skeletons. How did they move? How big were they? The more you learn about them, the more effective your drawings will be.

Moviemakers have done astounding things in creating worlds that no longer exist—or have never existed. I can only begin to imagine the mountains of research they had to dig through in order to achieve the necessary level of credibility reflected by their films.

I felt Tor needed to resemble today's man, yet be quite different. Since his very existence would depend on his physical strength, he would be heavily muscled with thick shoulders. Muscles would not stick out like inflated balloons, unless he was exerting himself. Otherwise, he'd look stiff in movement. Besides proper anatomical proportions, I gave him a strong jaw, thicker lips and dark eyes, shaded by a prominent brow. On closer examination, he bore scars from previous encounters with fellow inhabitants both animal and human.

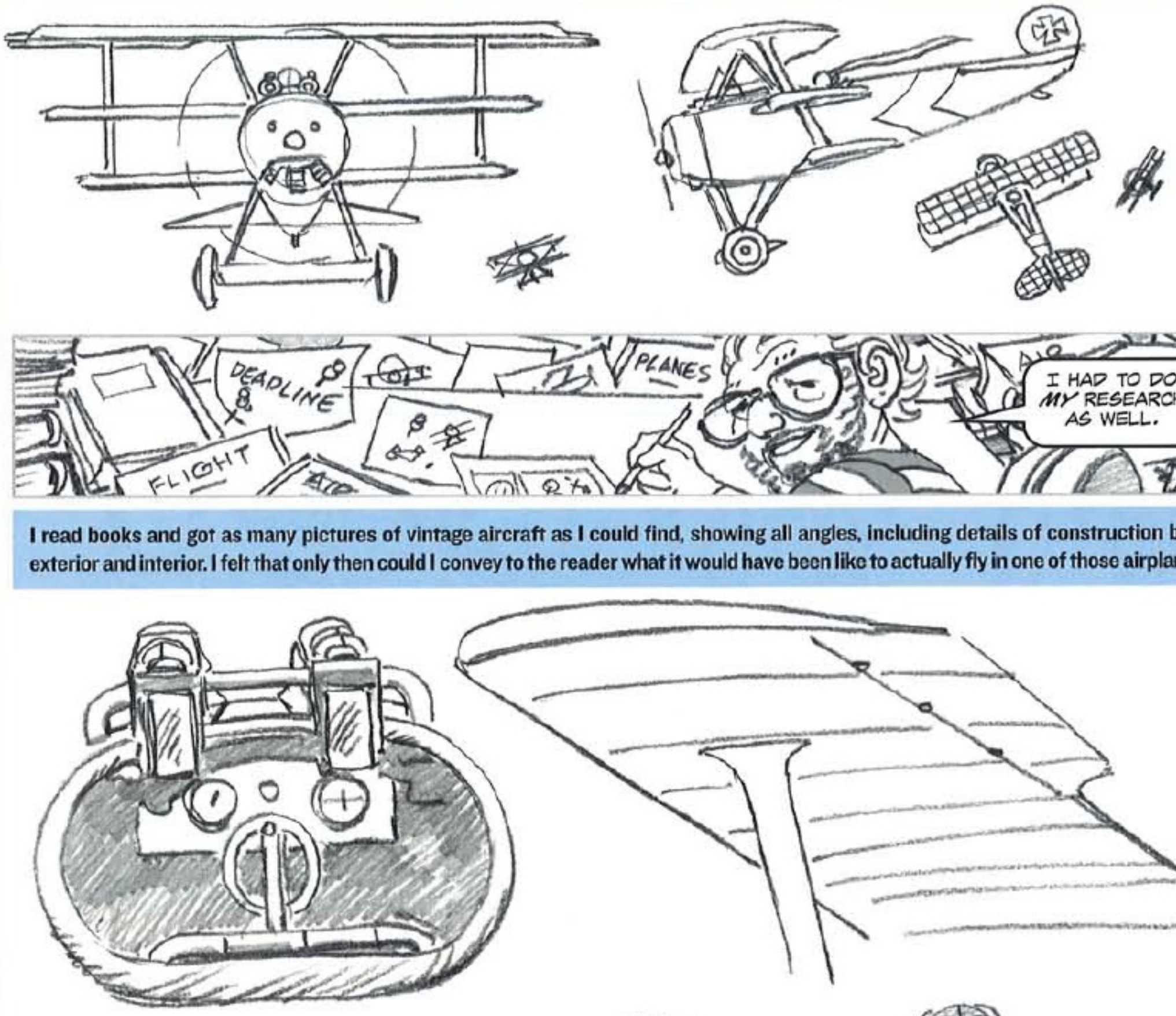



Tor, to me, isn't just a drawing. He's someone I know, someone I want my readers to accept and believe. If you'd like to learn about the entire history and development of Tor starting from his inception about 50 years ago, get the three-volume archive editions of *Tor* published by DC Comics.

# REFERENCE

Within the last 100 years, the development of flight has gone from small, single-seater wood and canvas airplanes held together by baling wire to interplanetary spacecraft.

I was asked to illustrate a story about air combat during World War I. In addition to the pilots, the other major characters were the airplanes. The story's title was "Enemy Ace," written by Robert Kanigher. He had researched flight tactics, airplane armaments and the kind of men who flew those "flying coffins."




I read books and got as many pictures of vintage aircraft as I could find, showing all angles, including details of construction both exterior and interior. I felt that only then could I convey to the reader what it would have been like to actually fly in one of those airplanes.

There were few standards as far as uniforms were concerned. Some wore leather, fur-trimmed jackets. Others attached bright-colored ribbons to their helmets (like knights of old) and long scarfs that trailed in the wind. They painted their aircraft distinctively, so they could identify their opponents. I included all these elements and more. It made the story and the characters more meaningful to me, and much more enjoyable to draw.

# GET YOUR REFERENCES BEFORE YOU START TO DRAW!

1. Get as many pictures as you can of the subjects you intend to draw, from as many angles as possible.

2. Become a 'regular' at your public library and local bookstore. Those places contain a wealth of information for every artist and cartoonist.

3. Log on the Internet and in minutes you can find pictures of every conceivable subject.

4. Build your own models. Then, you've got a permanent, three-dimensional example of your subject from every angle.

5. Videos, featuring animals, places and things.

6. Visit your local museums and don't forget your sketchbooks. Draw anything you see that might interest you. You never know when you'll be using those sketches as subjects in a cartoon strip you'll be drawing.

*Comics legend Joe Kubert is the founder of the Joe Kubert School of Cartooning and Graphic Art. Check out his graphic novel* Sgt. Rock: Between Hell and a Hard Place *from DC.*

# PHOTO REFERENCE

BY GREG LAND

Hey, everybody, Greg "Big Red" Land here. This time around, the topic is using reference. An artist uses reference to get a strong visualization of the object(s) to be illustrated. Let's say the story calls for a specific type of early locomotive. Unless the artist is a train enthusiast, he or she won't know what the specific object looks like. Looking up the locomotive in books would be the best way to be sure of accuracy. The list of artists who use reference is long, but a few that I admire are Alphonse Mucha, Olivia, James Bama, Joe Jusko and the great American illustrator, Norman Rockwell. Let's go ahead and take a look at a few examples I've put together.

## AFEWMOREQUESTIONS

What exactly is reference? Photos, still-life set-ups, a friend posing, pets, cars, the house across the street, virtually anything. Reference helps give the illustration a sense of accuracy. An example is the way clothes drape across a person's body.

Reference should be used as little or as much as the artist feels comfortable with in order to get the desired illustration, and can be gotten from books, magazines, newspapers, photos by the artist, the environment, almost anywhere.

FIGURE A

## STRIKEAPOSE

This example shows the heroine Arwyn from *Sojourn* in a relaxed pose (**Figure A**). I found an appealing model (Rebecca Romijn!) in a swimsuit magazine and used her basic stance (the crossed arms and the slight twist of the torso) as my starting point, then added Arwyn's expression, hair and costume. In this example, it was the pose I was after, not the clothes, hairstyle or facial expression.

ALL CHARACTERS ™ & © THEIR RESPECTIVE OWNERS. PHOTO: PAUL SCHRADER

FIGURE B




FIGURE C

FIGURE D




## CLOSE-UPS

I pull photos from my clip files (organized files of cut-out photos from magazines and newspapers), or take photos of my friends or myself for facial expression reference. These examples show how I've used the basic expression from the photo and changed hairstyles and clothing to make the drawing appropriate for the character. *Sojourn*'s Gareth **(Figure B)** is based off a model from a clothing ad. The young girl with the fearful expression is my niece, Brianna. In this example, the character **(Figure C)** looks very much like the photo to the left. On the other end of the spectrum is the troll drawing **(Figure D)**. Looking at the model's exaggerated facial expression (Okay, it's me), I was able to draw the features to get this character. I like to visualize the trolls as actors with Hollywood-style make-up applications. Finally, I drew the lovely Neven **(Figure E)** inspired by this model from an issue of *Sports Illustrated*.

FIGURE E

# PHOTOREFERENCE

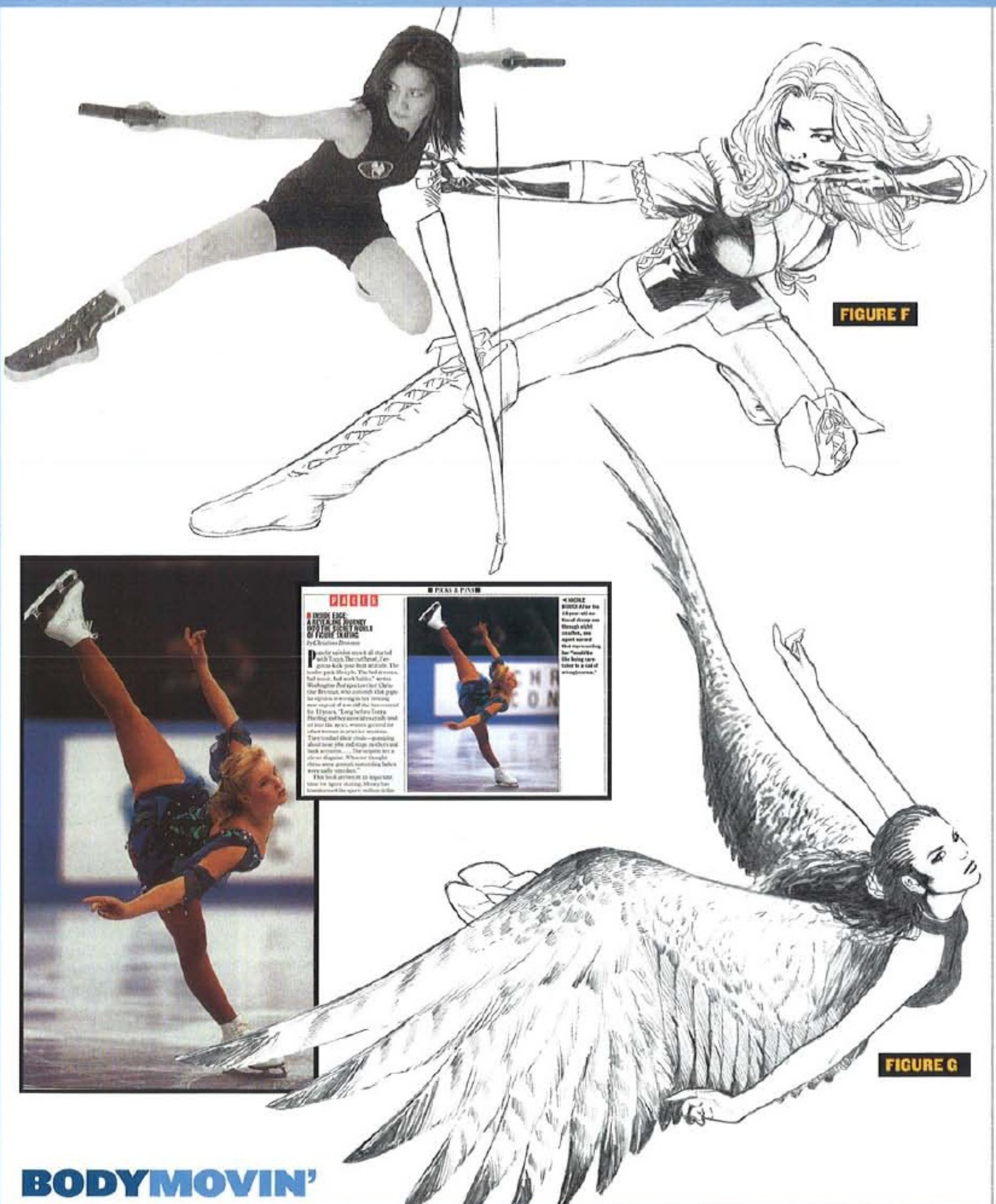


FIGURE F





PAGE 3 PAGE

INSIDE EDGE: A SEVEN-LINE JOURNEY INTO THE SECRET WORLD OF FIGURE SKATING

By Christine Brennan

FIGURE G

## BODYMOVIN'

These examples show full figures. The first is an action pose of Arwyn firing an arrow **(Figure F)**. My reference for this is a woman shooting a pair of guns. The second drawing is a winged female **(Figure G)**. I'm probably not going to find this in any reference book, but the gracefulness found in many athletes can be helpful. In this case, an ice skater helped with the pose for this flying woman. I got the wings by looking at different photos of birds. (Notice the different tones added to the wings, which are based on an osprey's.) Many times I have asked my wife and friends to act out character movements. I like to use a Polaroid camera to get a quick shot of the action. This is extremely helpful with panel composition, since I can move the model(s) around to get a variety of angles—upshots, downshots, close-ups, medium shots and distant shots. These all help to make the storytelling interesting.

## NATURETOUR

Environments—cities, water, castles, houses, woods or any other place the story takes us—are the places where the characters interact. The example I've drawn here is an open clearing leading up to a wooded area **(Figure H)**. Using a photo from *Country's Best Log Homes* helps to show the different shapes that the trees make. By drawing light and dark areas, a believable wooded setting is achieved.

FIGURE H

## PROPITUP

Props help to round out the environments and make the stories even more believable. The example I've drawn here is a custom street rod **(Figure I)**. All too often in comic books, cars are incorrectly drawn. A little extra effort of looking through car magazines or even Polaroids of personal vehicles can make all the difference—my model is from *Hot Rod Magazine*.

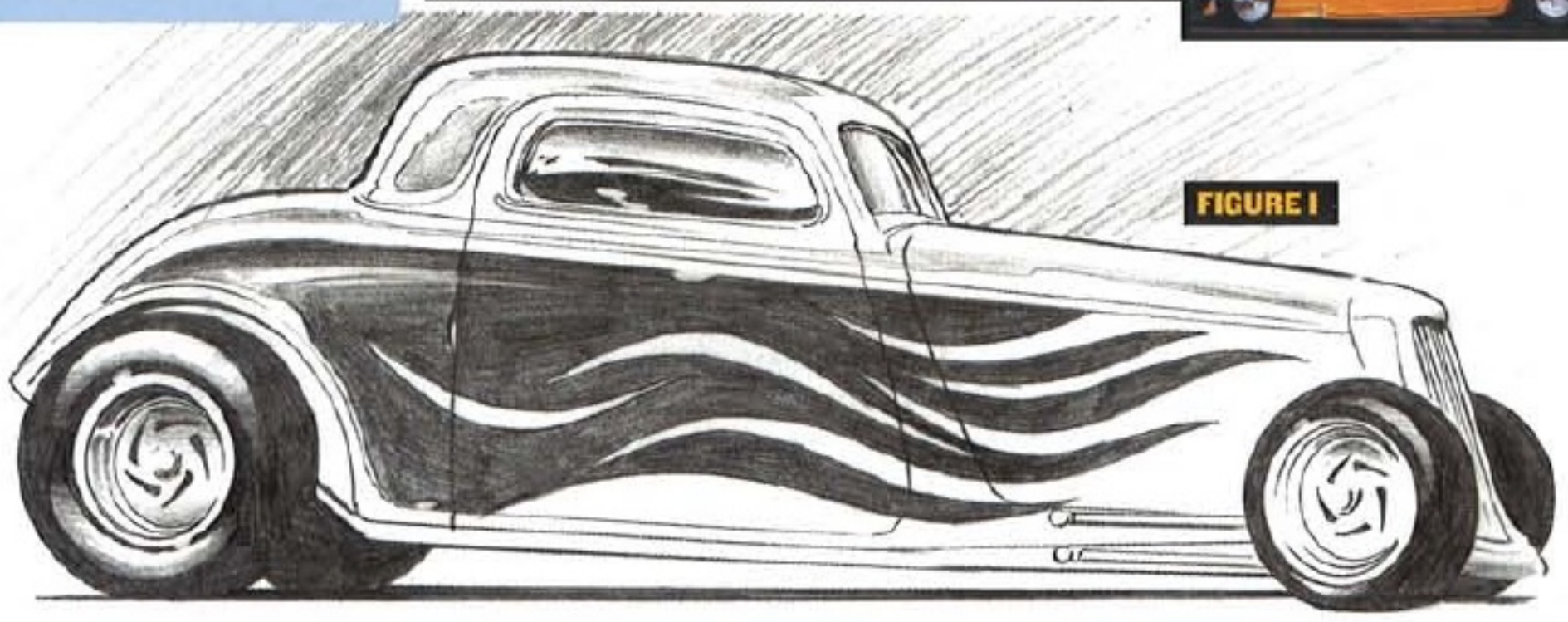


FIGURE I

# PHOTOREFERENCE

**THIS IS A MONTAGE** of some of the female characters from *Sojourn.* By using the previous drawings, I created this pin-up illustration. I've used heads, figures, props and environments along with some design elements to tie the piece together.

Hope this helps to show how important reference can be when drawing. Have fun with it—clip your magazines, save catalogues (I use my wife's catalogues after she is done with them) and save newspaper ads. Have your friends and family pose for you—this can be pretty funny. If something in a book looks interesting but you have no place to use it at present, make a copy and hang on to it; chances are you will find a place for it eventually. Good luck and keep drawing.

*Greg Land's detailed and referenced art has enhanced the pages of CrossGen's* Sojourn *and Marvel's* X-Men: Phoenix—Endsong.

# BACKGROUNDS

BY PHIL JIMENEZ

A lot of artists hate drawing backgrounds. I'm not sure why. I love to draw them. I'm one of those guys known for my detailed backgrounds. When fans and editors meet me, I often hear something like, "Hey, you're the detail guy" or, "We know you can draw backgrounds, so you've got the job."

I just love drawing chairs and buildings and people and mountains and animals. If you love to draw, why wouldn't you want to draw everything you can if given the chance? I've learned a lot just by doing the research to draw these things. And now I'm going to try and give you some tips I've picked up along the way.

## GROUNDEDINREALITY

There's nothing quite so impressive as a splash page with a favorite character like Wolverine or Spider-Man, charging at us with speedlines dashing past our face and theirs. Like I said above, a lot of folks don't like to draw backgrounds. So before I get into the how of it, I'd like to touch on the why.

Backgrounds give a character context; they establish the type of world he lives in. They also give us an environment, a place for the character to interact. Thanks to backgrounds, we can imagine our character in a particular backdrop, at a particular size, with particular objects and climate. Take a look at the image of the Incredible Hulk, below.

### PRO TIPS

**MOVIE BUFF**

"Since I can't watch TV while I'm painting, I like to play a movie I've already seen, and just simply listen to it as I work. I've listened to *Jaws* about 200 times."
—Greg Horn, *Emma Frost*

MARVEL, HULK, RAGE ™ & © 2005 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

# BACKGROUNDS

Now, take a look at him here. See what I mean? He's no longer in some Beverly Hills living room. He's surrounded by rubble and smoke and ruin—and he's raging. He is the Hulk, after all!

In both drawings, I've established an environment in which the Hulk can interact, and which gives us an idea of his size and demeanor (body language). In the living room, he's looking a little out of place—and I've drawn his body language to reflect that. But I've also drawn his body to reflect that—note his size compared to the other objects in the room. Compare that to his raging self amid the rubble above. See how when the context changes, so does he? Backgrounds help establish the world a character lives in.

## MAKEREFERENCE YOURPREFERENCE

If you're drawing the Grand Canyon or New York City, you need reference to surround you so that you know what things actually look like. My best sources for reference are magazines and books—anything with photos in it—including nature, architecture and furniture magazines, books on everything from animals to castles, and even old photographs.

## LAYITDOWN

Below is a quick look at my process. First, I establish with a loose drawing where the character's going to be, and in what action pose, with a slight hint of the background. Then I go in and start to add the details, adding more to the background elements in front and in back of the figure, remembering not to fill in the whole background, because word balloons will help with that. Once that's established, I start filling it all in.

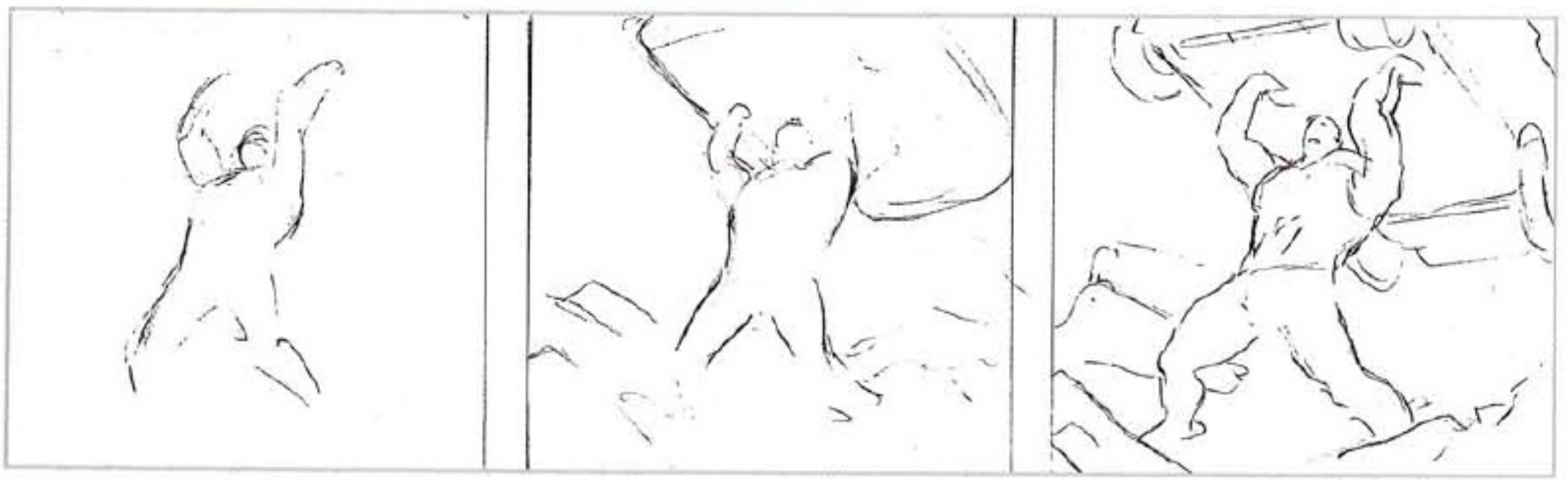
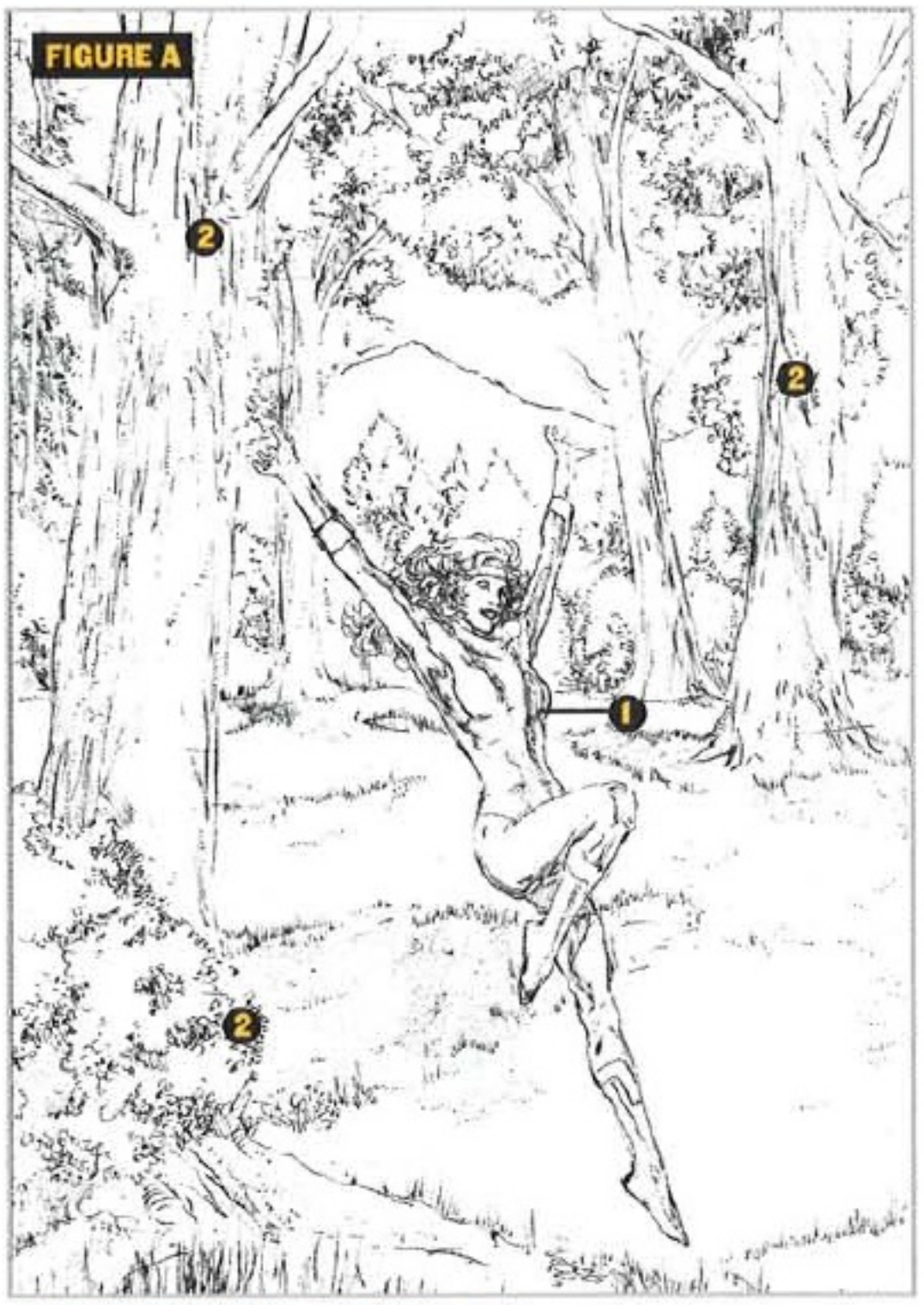


FIGURE A



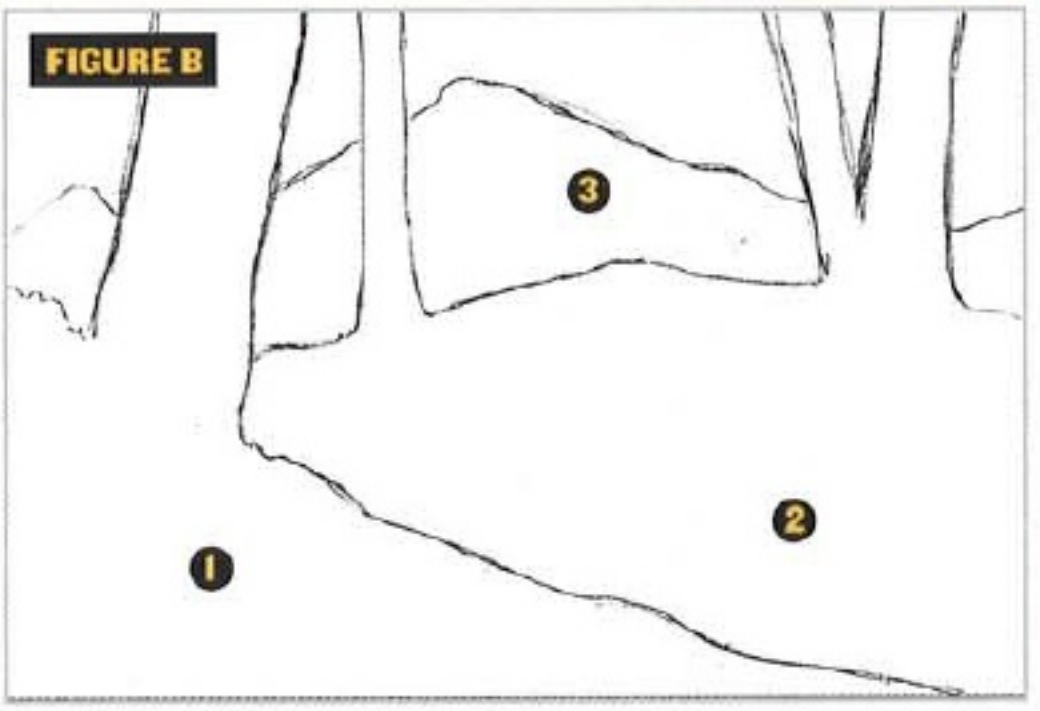

## BEAN ENVIRONMENTALIST

So here comes Rogue, flying down to enjoy some peace and quiet on a sunny day in the woods. How do I establish this environment and how do I lay it all down? Glad you asked.

First, I snag the reference. I wanted a park-like forest, so I checked my magazines and books—even animal books, because they have backgrounds, too—and found the right type of trees and grass. Whether you're drawing airplanes or grassy knolls, it's all the same. Sure, the reference might be different, but the process is the same.

Then, I sketch in Rogue **(Figure A-1)** while filling in the details of the trees and shrubs around her **(Figure A-2)**, keeping in mind things like light sources and shadow.

FIGURE B



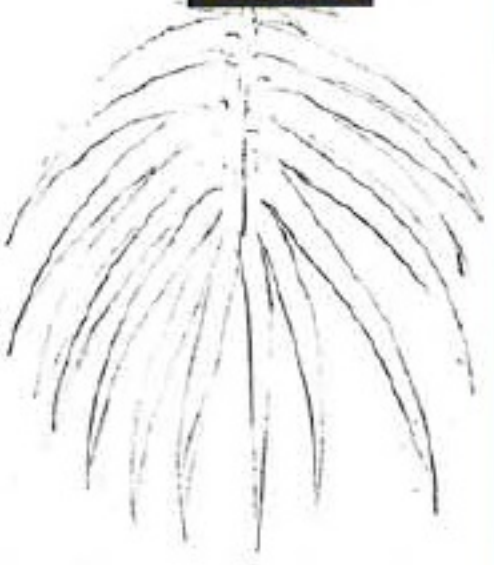

## SETDESIGN

A good way to work is to think of your characters as "actors," and the backgrounds as the "stage" or "set." There are three parts to the "set": the foreground, the middle ground and the background. These are the three planes of a background, and we use them to create a "room" for the character to act in.

The foreground **(Figure B-1)** is the part that's "closest" to us, the viewers; it's usually in our face, almost as if we were there. Our hand could reach out and touch the foreground in some cases. The middle ground **(Figure B-2)** is often the part where the character interacts, because it's the center and focus of the panel. The background **(Figure B-3)** is the stuff waaaay in the back (although not always that far) that creates the far "wall" of the room the character's acting in.

FIGURE C

FIGURE D



## CHANGEOFSCENERY

You can draw a character in any environment, with any background, on any kind of set you want. That's the cool part about comics. But remember: If you change anything on the set, you change the context, and the character's behavior should change appropriately.

Check out the leaves above. They suggest different types of environment. The bushy leaves on the left **(Figure C)** suggest a drier, more foresty kind of place. The leaves on the right are from a humid South American jungle **(Figure D)**.

See what happens when I draw one kind of forest and not the other **(Figure E-1)**? The whole environment changes, and Rogue's reaction (surprise and trepidation) in **Figure E-2** changes appropriately. Your background will dictate how your character reacts within it.

FIGURE E

# BACKGROUNDS

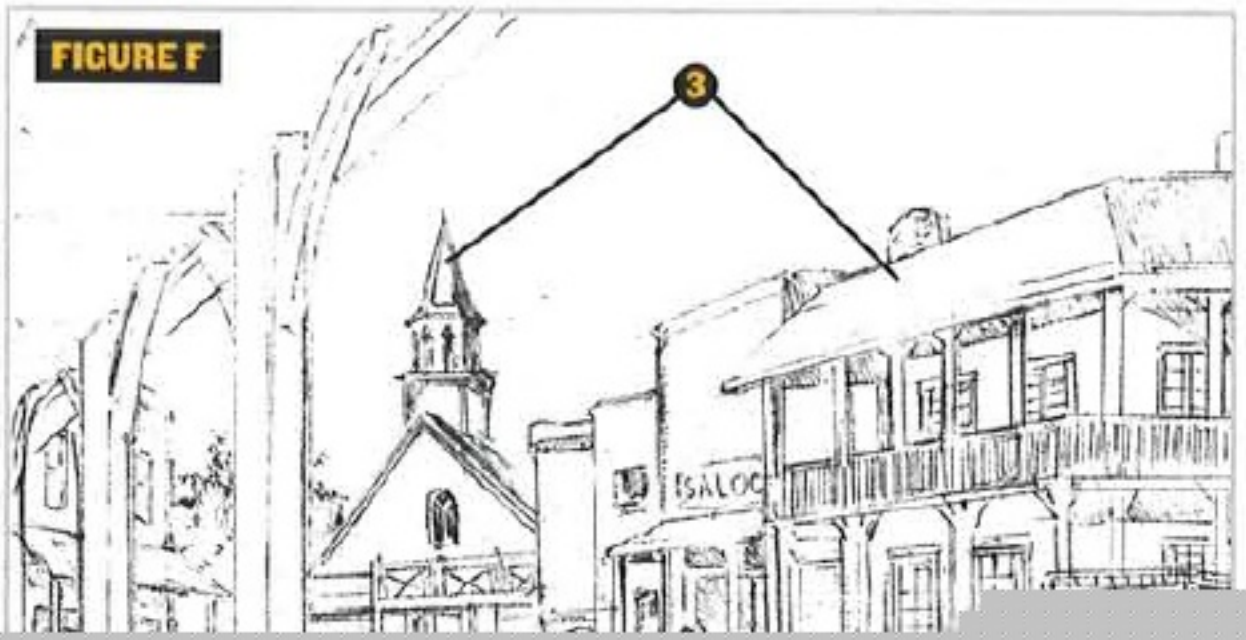
## SETTINGTHE STAGE

Okay, say your hero was transported to the Old West in a time tunnel. How do we create the background (the environment) for him to work in?

First, we get the reference: books on the Old West, photo books and movie reviews on Western movies from the 1920s to the '90s, anything with appropriate visual reference.

Then, we lay it all in. I sketched in our hero **(Figure F-1)** with an appropriate shocked pose

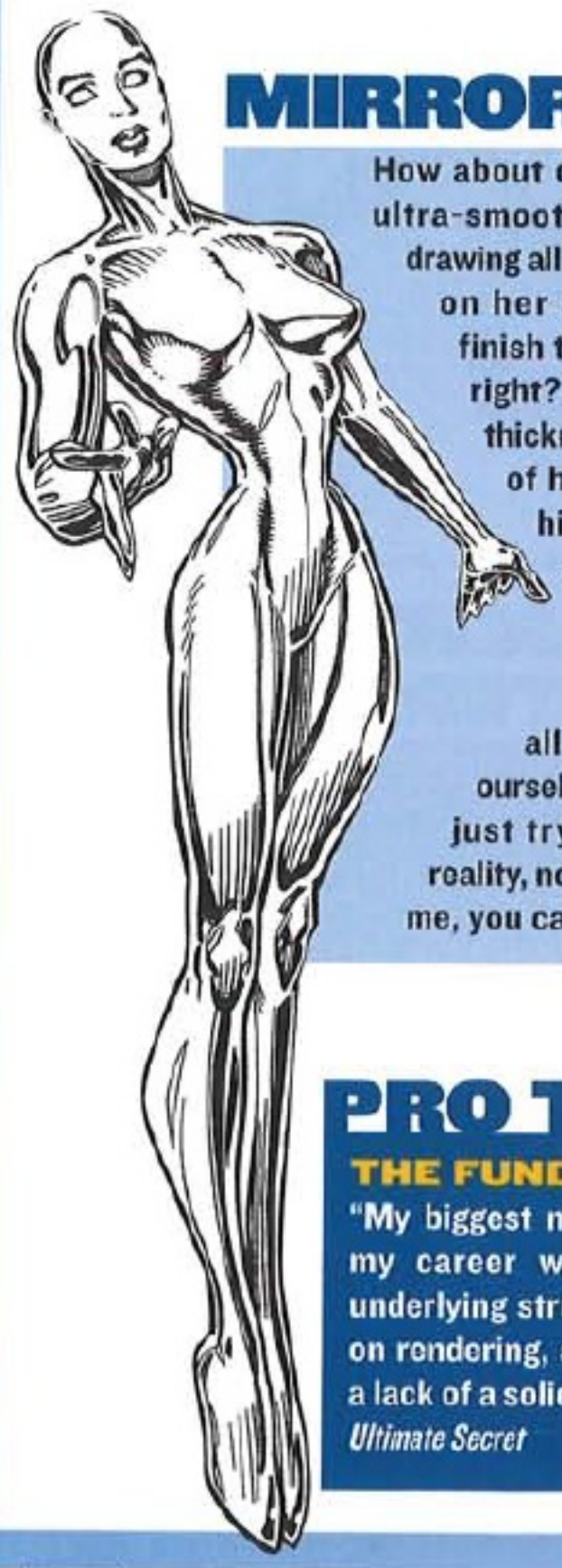
FIGURE F



## OUTOFSHAPE

For a nasty, ill-tempered, somewhat overweight and definitely unsanitary guy like Mojo, we go for a kind of blotchy look. These extra bits of rendering help us show, again, mass and bulk. Just how this is achieved in this case is difficult to put into words (for me, anyway). But partly it has to do with the angle of the rendering or feathering near the shaded areas on Mojo, as well as all those splotches drawn on his body. Just practice, you'll get it right.

You may also notice that the bread on Mojo's sandwich has texture similar to the orange's on the first page. That's okay. This isn't really a piece of bread, it's a drawing of bread. So you don't have to actually eat it. Your job is simply to convey a sense of reality to whatever object you're illustrating. This is drawing, not photography.



## MIRROR, MIRROR

How about drawing a super-reflective, ultra-smooth character. You could try drawing all the objects near her reflected on her surface, but you want to finish this drawing in your lifetime, right? Try drawing lines of various thicknesses parallel to the outlines of her form. Also suggest some highlights or gleams in various areas. All these things help show that our character is highly reflective without actually drawing all the reflections and driving ourselves insane. Remember, you're just trying to give the illusion of reality, not create reality itself. Believe me, you can't. I've tried.

### PRO TIPS

**THE FUNDAMENTALS**

"My biggest mistake in the beginning of my career was not concentrating on underlying structure. I was more focused on rendering, and my work suffered from a lack of a solid foundation." —Steve McNiven, *Ultimate Secret*

**AND THAT ENDS** today's drill. Remember, just 'cause I draw texture this way doesn't mean you have to. There are other terrific comics artists like Bruce Timm or Mike Mignola who can convey a whole world of textures with just three dots and a dash. (God, I hate those guys!)

And remember this: When it's time to draw an orange, GO GET AN ORANGE! It's okay to look at the ways other artists draw things, but every once in a while, look at real life things! Believe me, it will only help your drawing.

A final note, before I go: As long as you treat it with respect, texture can be your friend! Now hit the road, ya wusses!

*Art Adams' funky textures can be seen on all sorts of neato comics, from Marvel's* X-Men *to Dark Horse's* Monkeyman & O'Brien *to DC's* Action Comics.

# METALLIC SURFACES

BY JIM CALAFIORE

Metal. Along with spandex and leather, it's an important texture within the world of comics. Take it away, and a lot of superheroes would be running around empty-handed, half-naked or missing an appendage or two (or six or seven).

Unfortunately, polished metal can't be graphically represented as it really exists, reflecting everything around it like a tinted mirror. That just wouldn't work in panel-to-panel comics (except for specific effect shots, like a face reflected in a shield). So we cheat. We rely on areas of light, shading and highlights to simulate the effect well enough so readers see it as metal. Which isn't all that easy, either...

## HAVEABALL

A good place to start is with a simple exercise using a chrome sphere. In **Figure A**, we divide the sphere with a strong black line across its equator, designating the top half as reflecting "light," and the bottom half as "shadow." The light source in **Figure B** is now behind the sphere, back-lighting it, which creates a large shadowed area. **Figure C** brings the light source to "our" side of the sphere, expanding the reflected light area. In **Figure D**, the light has moved to about 10 o'clock. Note how the upper edge of the shaded area curves to the shape of the sphere differently as it changes position.

There are two important points here: First, always be aware of and stay consistent with light sources. Second, perceive the sphere as a three-dimensional shape, not just a circle. To interpret how light plays across an object, you have to think of the object as occupying space in the real world, especially when dealing with something like the geometric shapes of bulky armor plating.

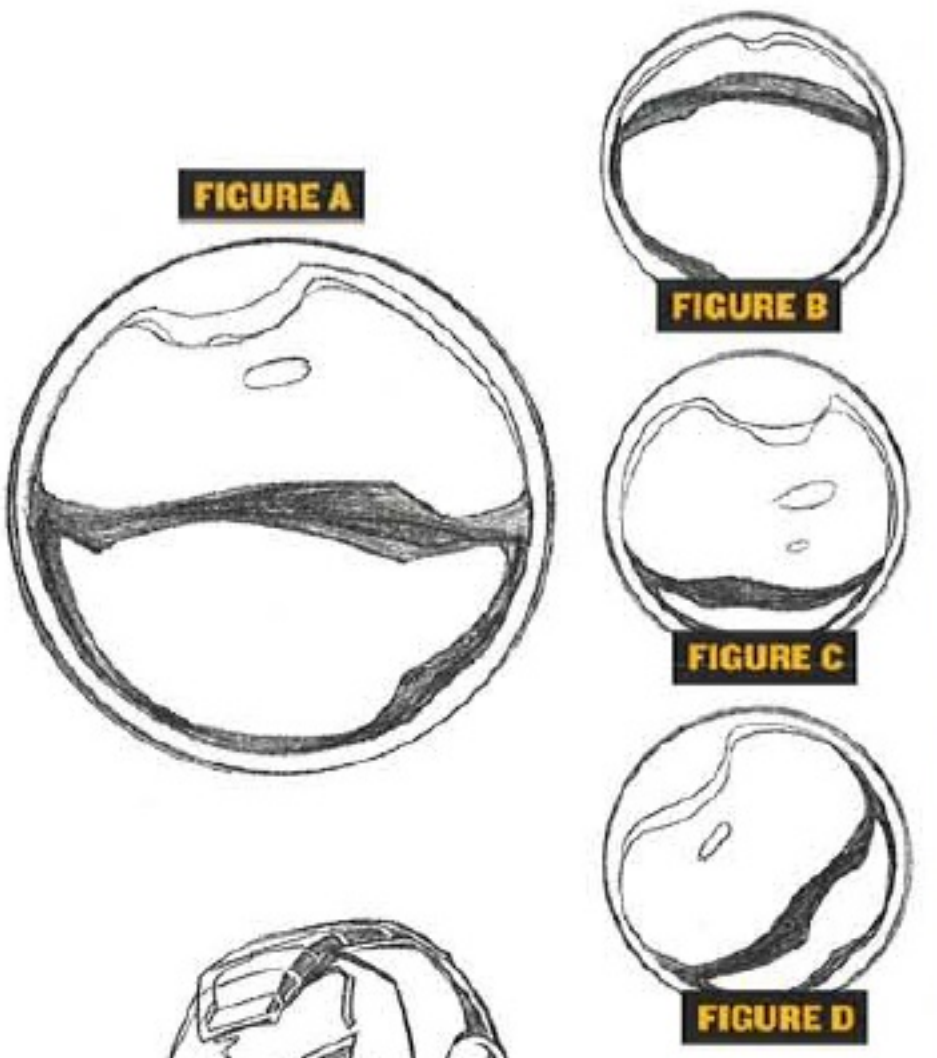


FIGURE A

FIGURE B

FIGURE C

FIGURE D

## KEEPYOUR PLATESCLEAN

Here are two good examples of armor plating. Juggernaut's simple armor **(Figure E)** is great to draw, especially that bullet helmet. Bulky armor is basically made up of smooth geometric shapes and requires simple shapes in the rendering. On Juggy, I've used a back-light similar to **Figure B**, and separated the light from shadow with strong, clean black shading. Although I highlighted the upper edge of his helmet and shoulders with a more loose "reflection" line, the overall shading is kept very simple. (I usually render the shadowed area in black, but I left it open on Juggy for a mood effect.)

FIGURE E

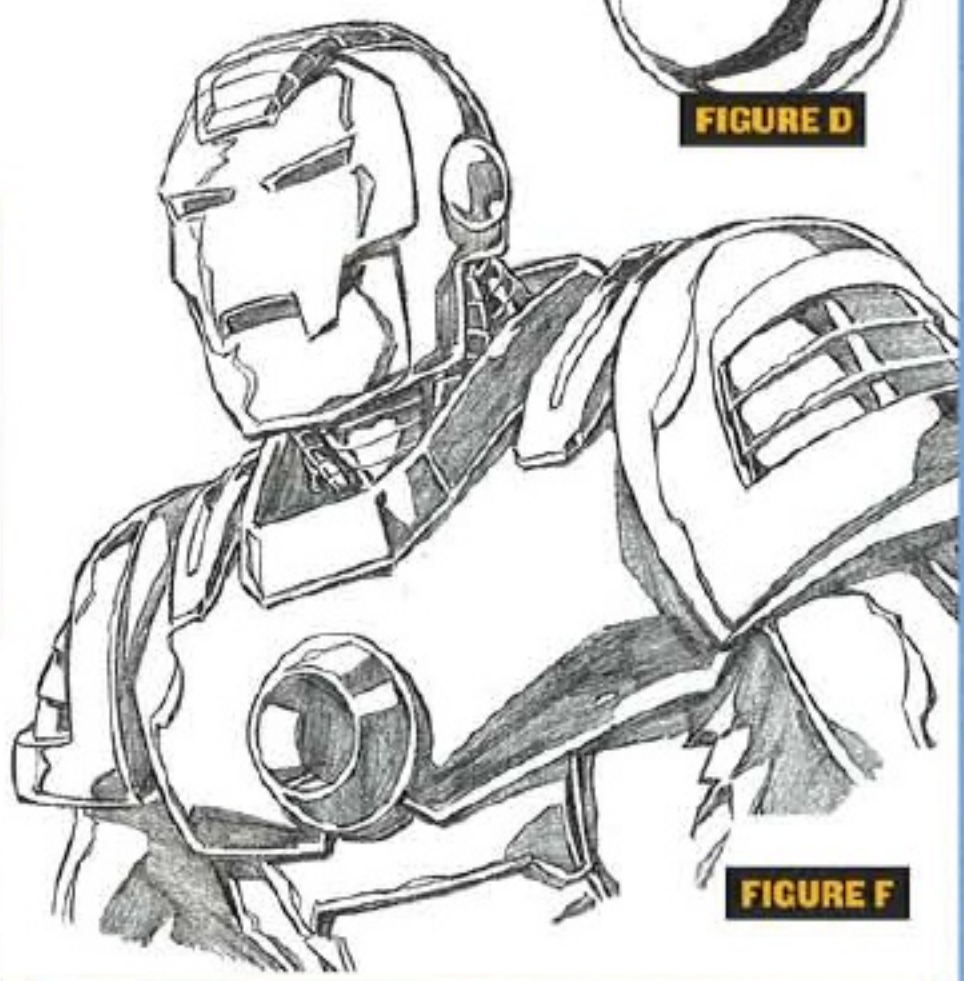


FIGURE F

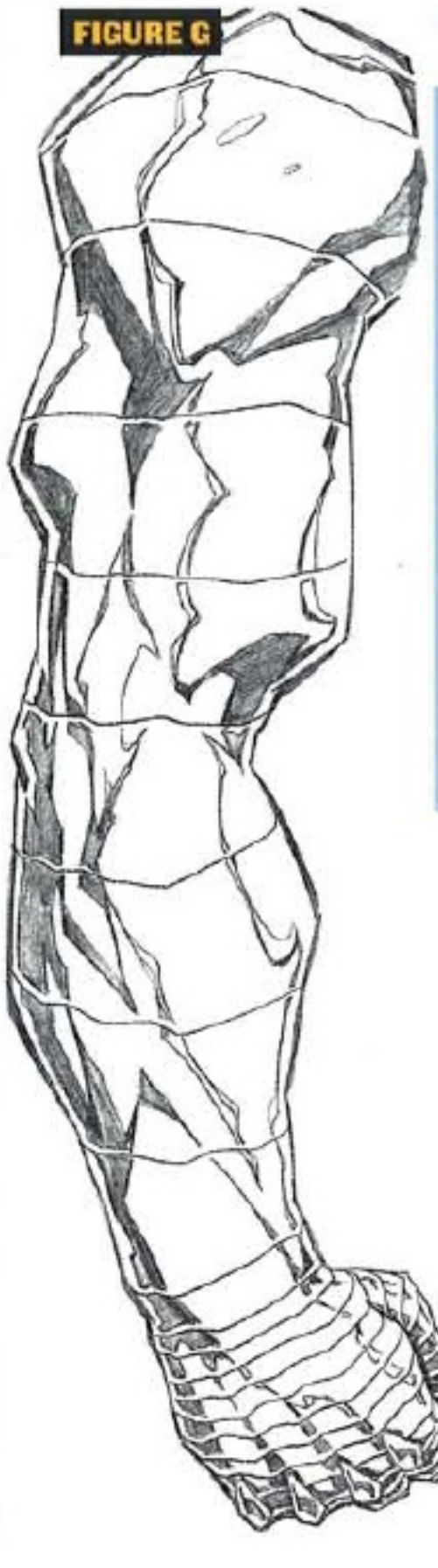
The War Machine armor **(Figure F)** might seem much more difficult to interpret than Juggy's, but if you concentrate on its parts rather than the whole, it's not. Most bulky armor can be broken down into various geometric shapes: the semicircle of the shoulder pad, the vertical walls of the octagonal collar, the half-sphere of the ear cap, the squareness of the chest plates, etc. With a consistent light source, each item can be rendered to its particular dimensions.

MARVEL, IRON MAN, JUGGERNAUT, SILVER SURFER ™ & © 2015 MARVEL CHARACTERS INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

# METALLICSURFACES

## TOARMS!

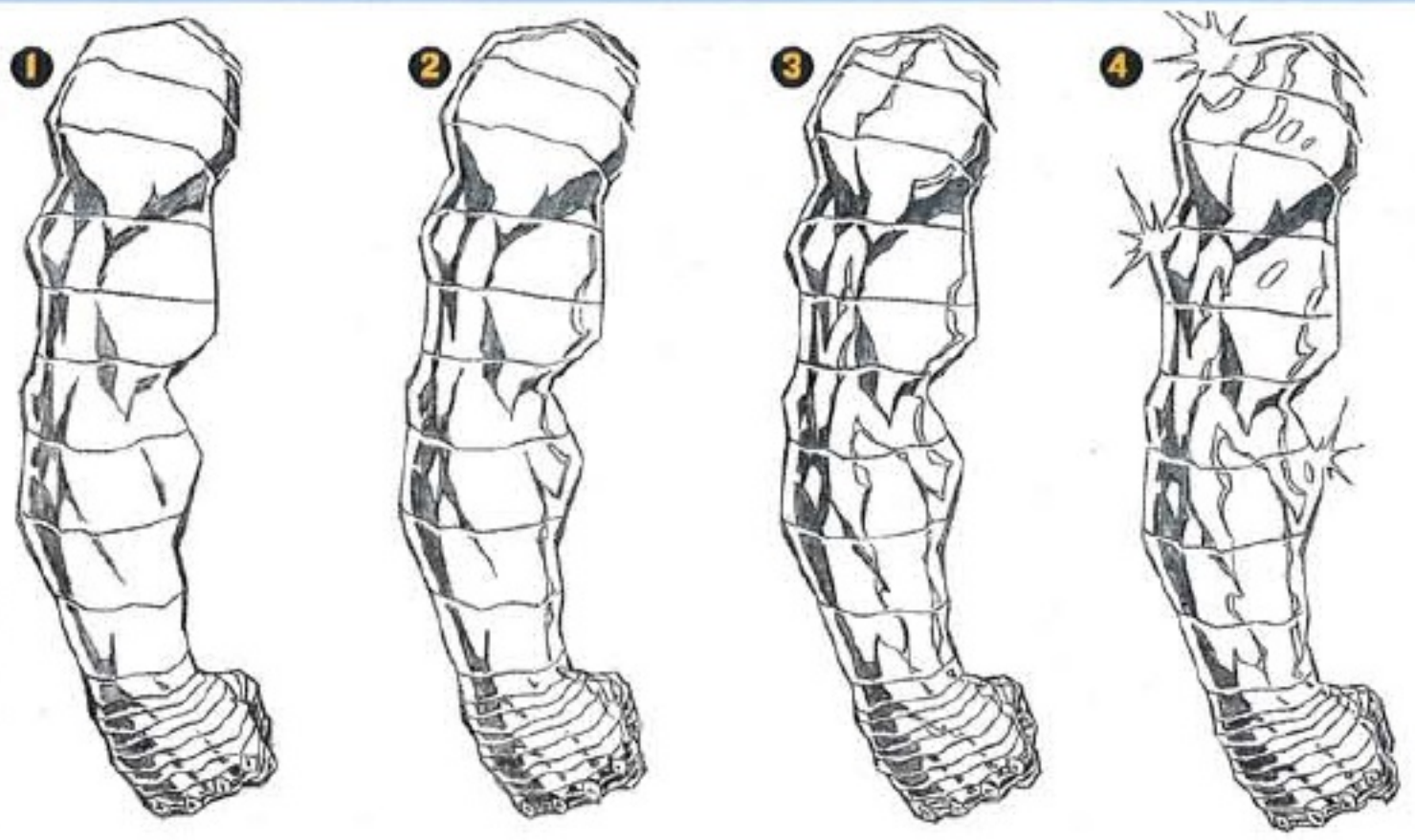
FIGURE G



Skintight metal presents specifically different problems, most of which depend on a good knowledge of the underlying structure (bone, muscle, etc.), since that's what influences the reflective patterns. With this right arm (**Figure G**), I first chose a light source (on "our side" of the arm, at about 2 o'clock), which led to define the areas of deep shadow created by the muscle forms. I then added reflection lines, delineating the reflected light source to the arm's right side. For internal lighting, I used some doubled linework to follow and accentuate the dramatic way in which the irregular musculature catches the light. The linework on skintight metal can have more life and flair to it, but be careful not to go too crazy and obliterate the structure underneath.

**Figures G-1** through **G-4** illustrate varying degrees of shine. For a dull, unpolished look (**1**), shade only the areas of deep shadow, leaving the rest unhighlighted. A single highlight line along the opposite edge of the arm (**2**) gives it an instant soft polish. **Number 3** is highly polished where every curve and indentation picks up shadow and light and reflects it back. I usually reserve a sparkling polish (**4**) for otherworldly or fresh-off-the-rack armor. A couple of starbursts off the edges, and few small ovals of a reflected light source, make for super-shininess.

Also of note here is that these arms are sheathed in banded metal. By leaving a small gap in the shading at the bottom of each band, I've accented the fact that all this metal is layered and pieced together.




## METALMEN

Metal as skin, for characters like Silver Surfer, doesn't present any new problems, except you need to express more of an overall fluidity. Taking an isolation of the Surfer's right arm (at right) and comparing it with the previous section's arms, you can see they're pretty similar, except for a bit more delineation of the muscle structure of Surfer's arm to make it feel tighter than just a metal sheath. This effect can be pushed even further, to the point where each muscle is its own bundle of metal—each shiny muscle distinctly separated from the other by hard outlines (Colossus' metal form, for example). This again demands a strong knowledge of the muscle structures involved.

# METALLIVES!

Here are some quick techniques with drop-shadows that let your metal exist in real three-dimensional space. Referring back to the previous examples, you can see I've been using these tricks all along.

Using War Machine's left arm (**Figure H**), I've shaded the individual components (shoulder pad, arm and gauntlet) as if they weren't connected to each other. Each part has its own shape, but as a whole, it's pretty flat. In **Figure I**, I've made an effort to consider how each component affects the other. The gauntlet casts a shadow across the forearm, as the shoulder pad does across the biceps. Comparing the two, the whole illustration "pops" out considerably more in **Figure I.**

FIGURE H

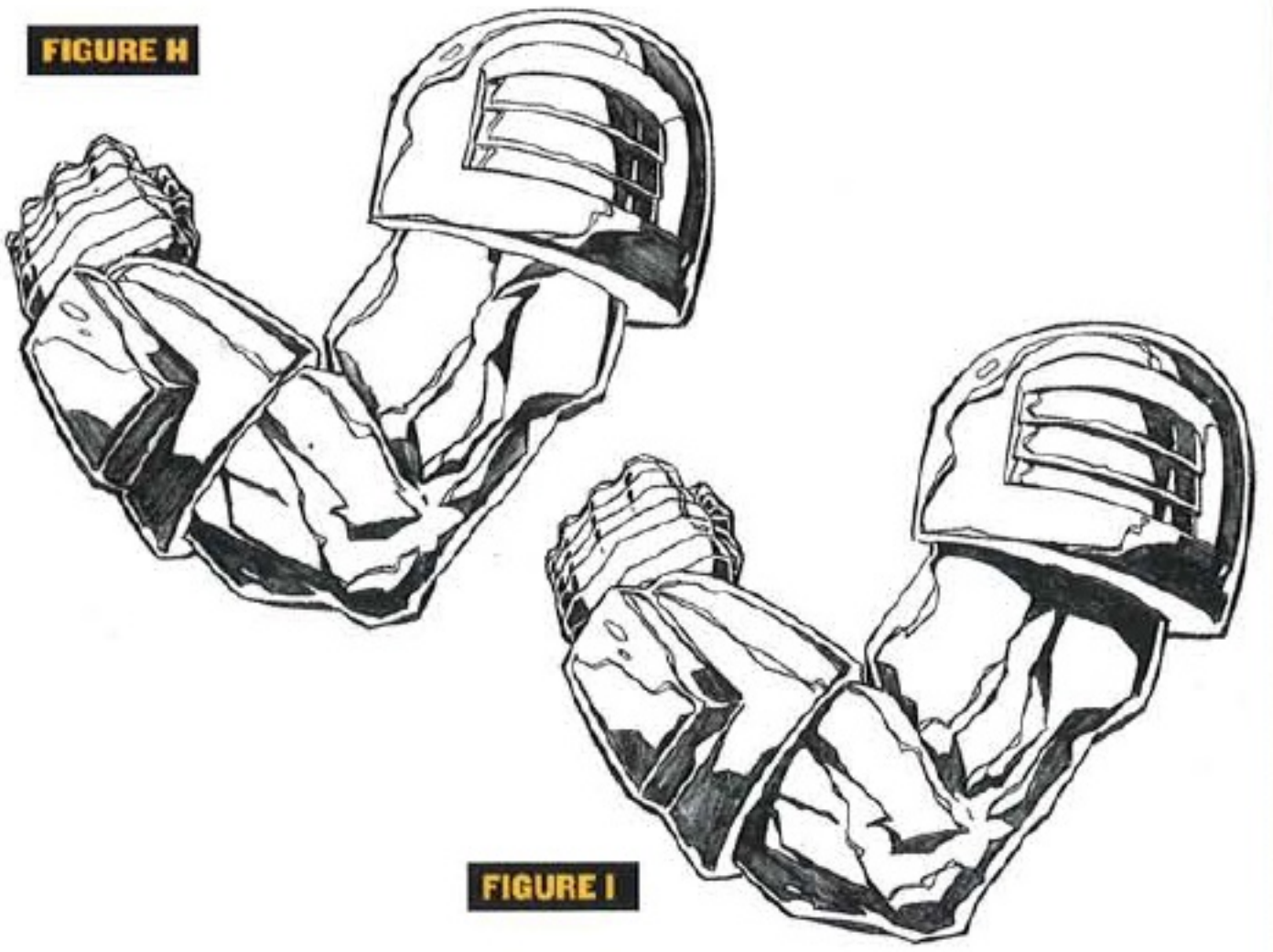


FIGURE I

FIGURE J

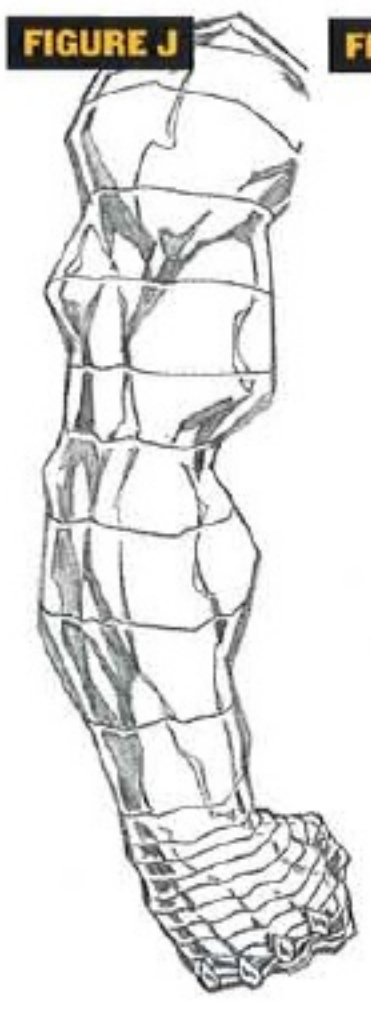


FIGURE K

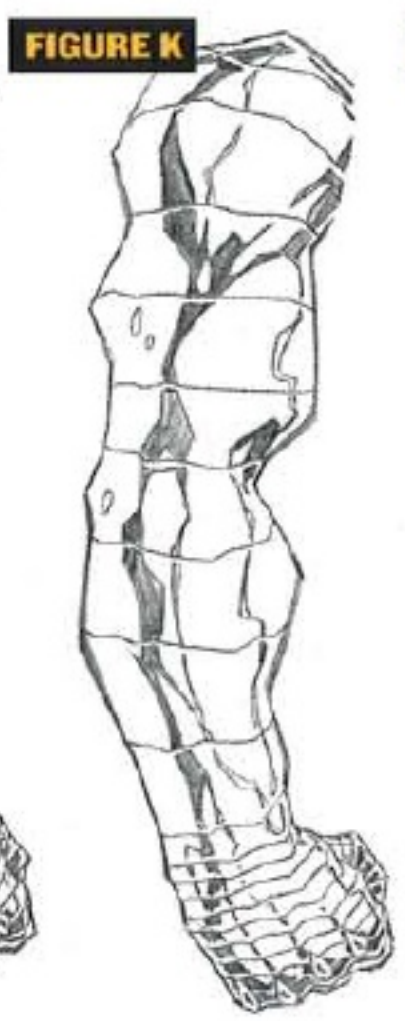
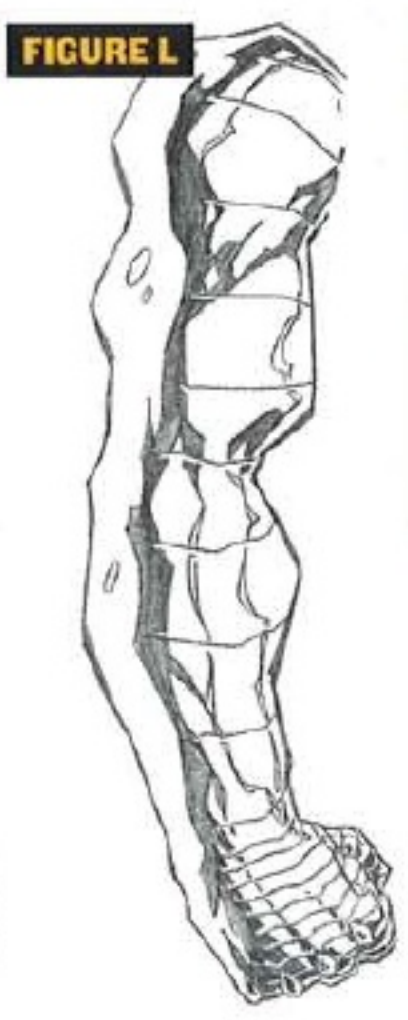


FIGURE L



# HALOS

Leaving a thin margin of white (known as a halo) between the shading and the outline of the arm (**Figure J**) is the simplest way to imply a reflective surface. The halos can be altered for different effects. Increasing the depth of the halo (**Figure K**) indicates a strong secondary light source. To increase it to an extremely bright secondary light source, I removed any detail from the haloed area in **Figure L.** Save this one for special moments.

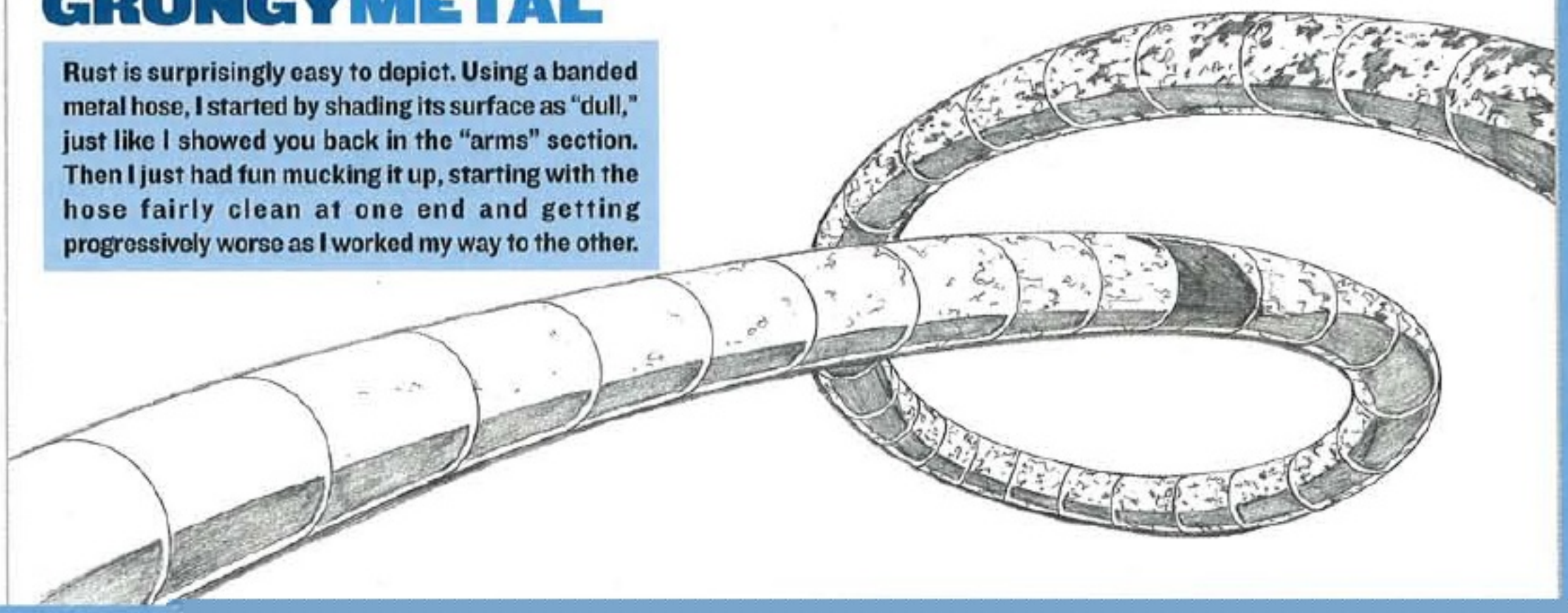
# PRO TIPS

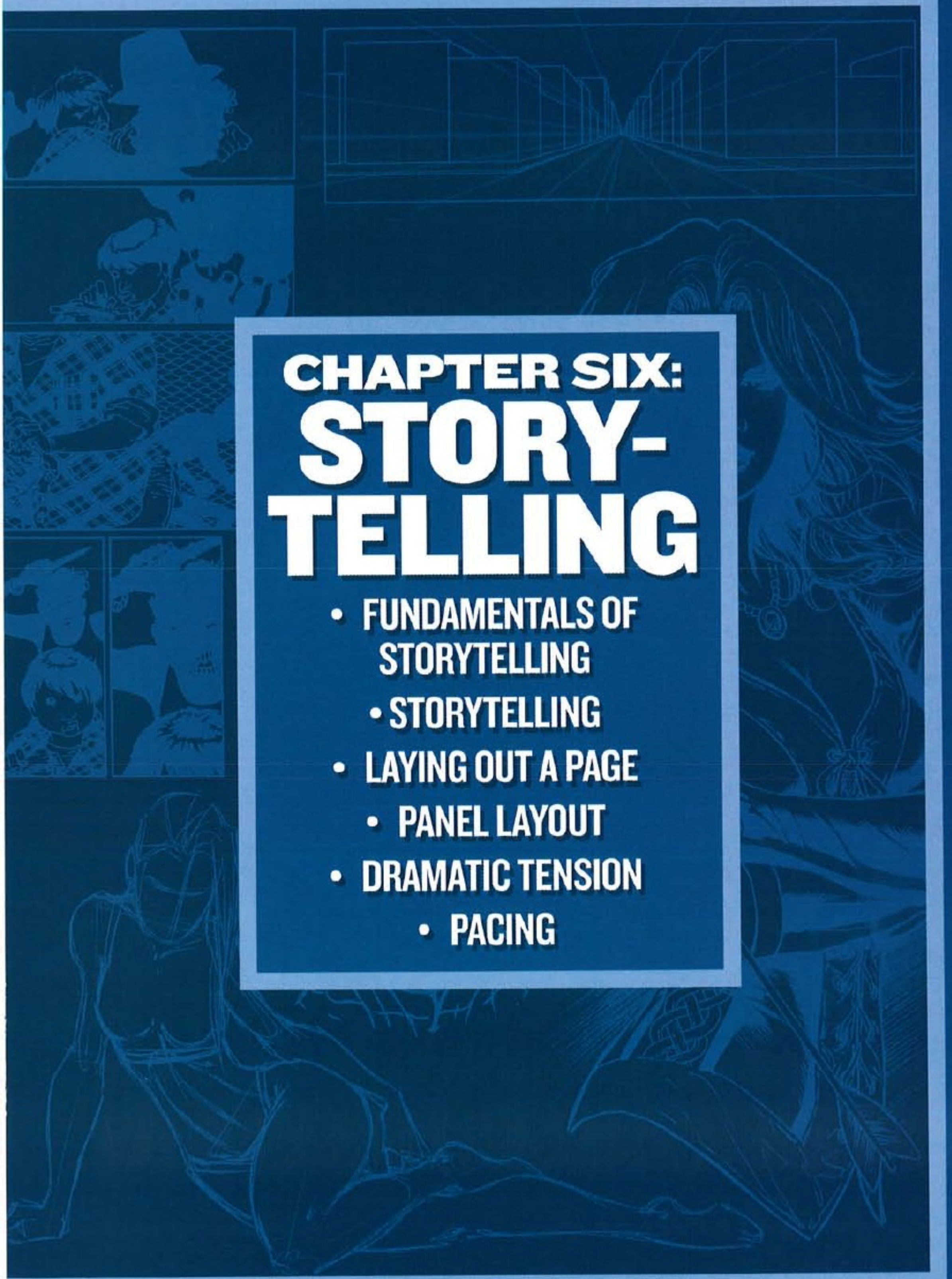
## GET PHYSICAL

"We have such sedentary jobs and we work late hours, and physically, it's really grinding. So go out and play sports, exercise, run, jog, something. If you're thinking of a career in comics, it helps to have that sense of competition you get playing sports." —Jim Lee, *All-Star Batman & Robin*

# GRUNGYMETAL

Rust is surprisingly easy to depict. Using a banded metal hose, I started by shading its surface as "dull," just like I showed you back in the "arms" section. Then I just had fun mucking it up, starting with the hose fairly clean at one end and getting progressively worse as I worked my way to the other.





# CHAPTER SIX: STORY-TELLING

- FUNDAMENTALS OF STORYTELLING
- STORYTELLING
- LAYING OUT A PAGE
- PANEL LAYOUT
- DRAMATIC TENSION
- PACING

## CHAPTER SIX: PART I

# FUNDAMENTALS OF STORYTELLING

BY JOE KUBERT

**Hi! I'm Joe Kubert (or a reasonably caricatured facsimile), and this is the first in a series of storytelling articles that I and other artists have been asked to do for you, the *Wizard* readers. Turning text into pictures may sound like an easy procedure, but in fact, it is a difficult task. Sometimes, even daunting. Nevertheless, it's the primary job of the professional cartoonist. Telling a story in picture form with clarity, impact, drama, humor and with a smooth flow of continuity is really what cartooning is all about.**

**Pretty pictures are nice to look at. Eye candy. But if the pictures are complicated and difficult to discern, the story becomes elusive. And if the story is hard to read, the cartoonist is not doing his job.**

## SCRIPT

**Panel One-**

**Description:** Big panel. Long shot. A caveman enters a wild looking area filled with huge boulders and marshy depressions.

**Man (thought):** I HAVE NEVER SEEN THIS PLACE BEFORE.

**Panel Two-**

**Description:** He's suddenly aware of a noise—a scream. He turns to look in the direction of the sound.

**Panel Three-**

**Description:** From behind a big rock, a woman comes running towards him. She is wild with fear, screaming.

**Woman:** HELP... HELP ME P-PLEASE!

**Panel Four-**

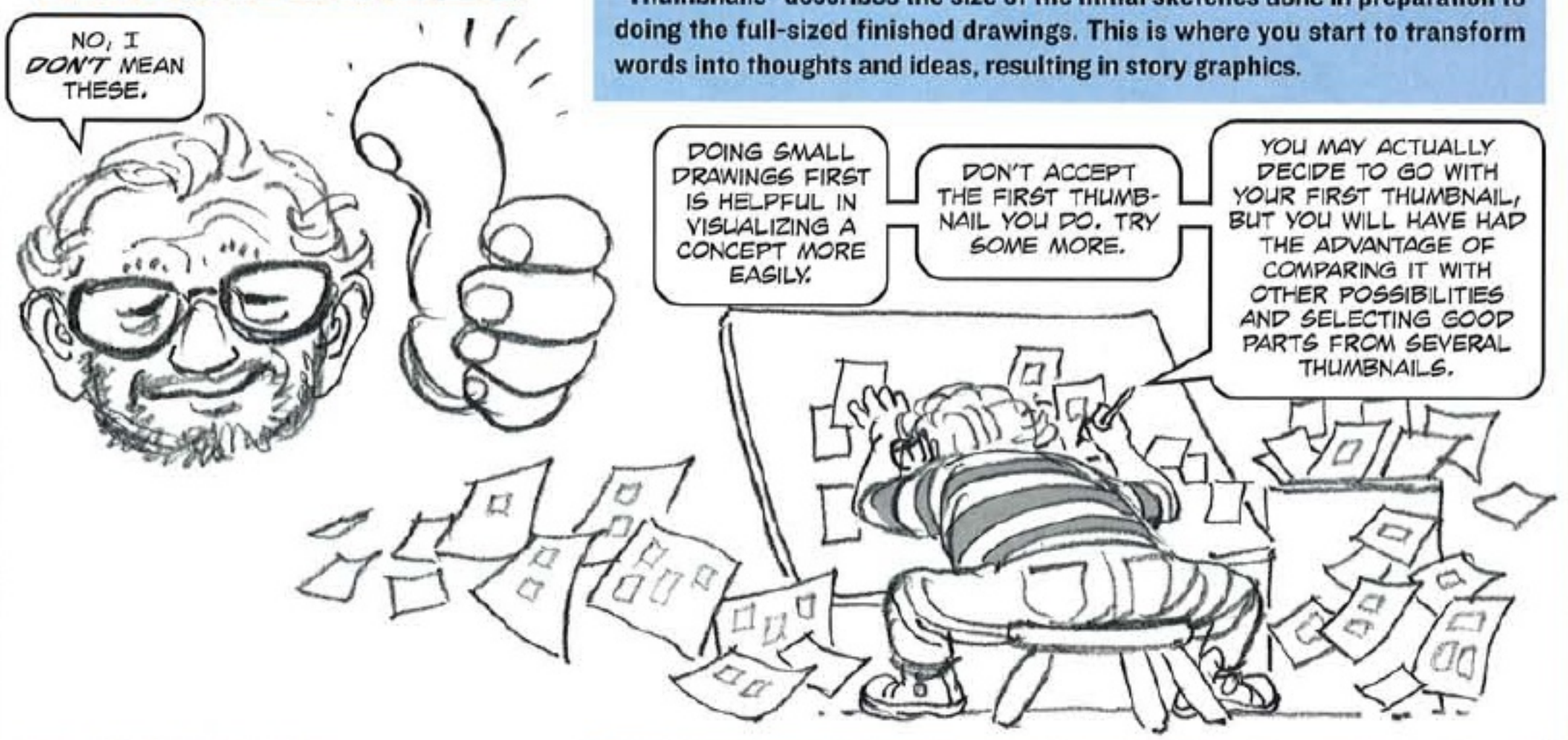
**Description:** A giant robotic T. Rex monster charges into the scene.

**Panel Five-**

**Description:** Close-up of T. Rex's head roaring/snarling.

# THUMBNAILS

"Thumbnails" describes the size of the initial sketches done in preparation to doing the full-sized finished drawings. This is where you start to transform words into thoughts and ideas, resulting in story graphics.




# ROUGHS

Start by doing your first drawings roughly. Leave out details. I know you're anxious to do some real finished drawing, but it's too soon. You don't want to put a lot of effort into early drawings that you may want to change or even eliminate. So do your initial sketches roughly, but with enough clarity to recognize what you meant when you finish them later on.

# INCLUDE BALLOONS

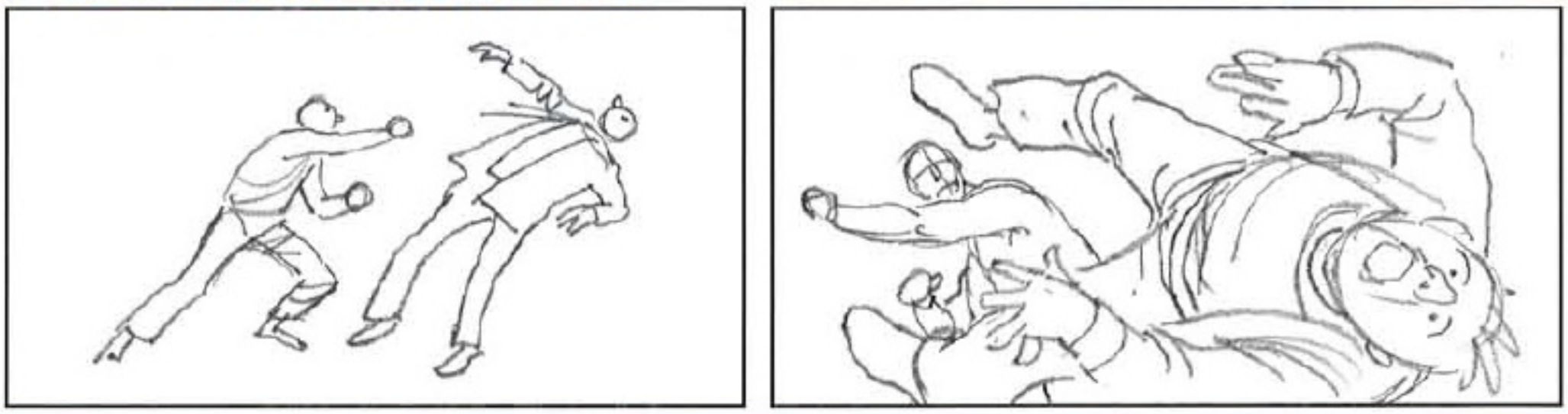
Text is an integral part of designing a comic book page. Balloons and captions ***must*** be incorporated in the initial layouts, not as an afterthought. It makes ***little sense*** to plan a panel composition and then ***cover*** half of the illustration with a word balloon or sound effect.

# FUNDAMENTALSOFSTORYTELLING

A comic book page must have a smooth transition from panel to panel. As cartoonists, we attempt to give the impression of movement despite the fact that we draw "still" pictures. To achieve the impression of movement, we must plan our panels with enough graphic information for the reader to connect the in-between panels in their mind's eye. Anything that disrupts the flow (like too great a jump between panels, or not enough graphic information) disrupts the story's flow for the reader **(Figure A)**. A disruptive flow stops the movement.

## SIZEVARIATIONS

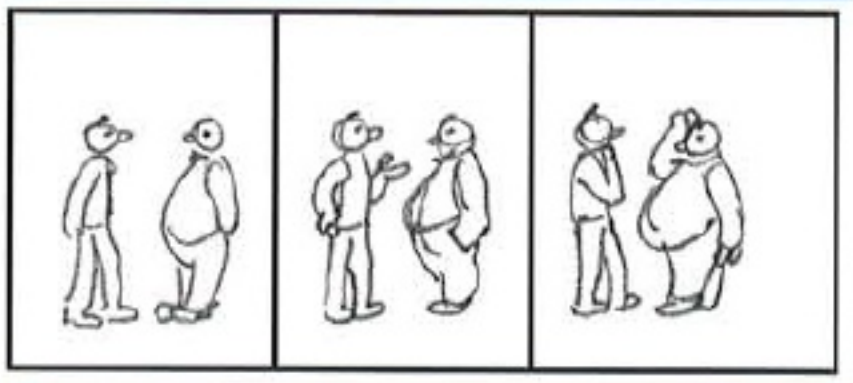
Variations of sizes of objects and figures are extremely important in creating movement.



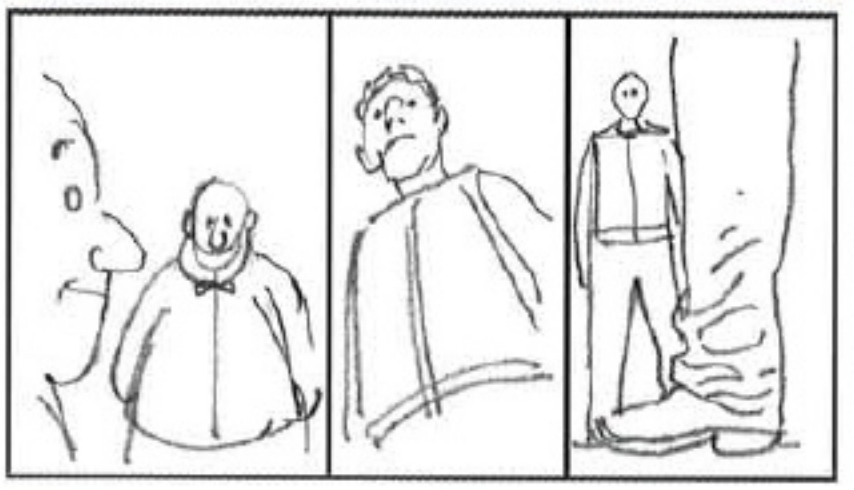
A series of panels containing figures of similar size will tend to stultify or deaden movement and action. It's like making a movie with a stationary camera. Little change in size means less movement and truncated action.

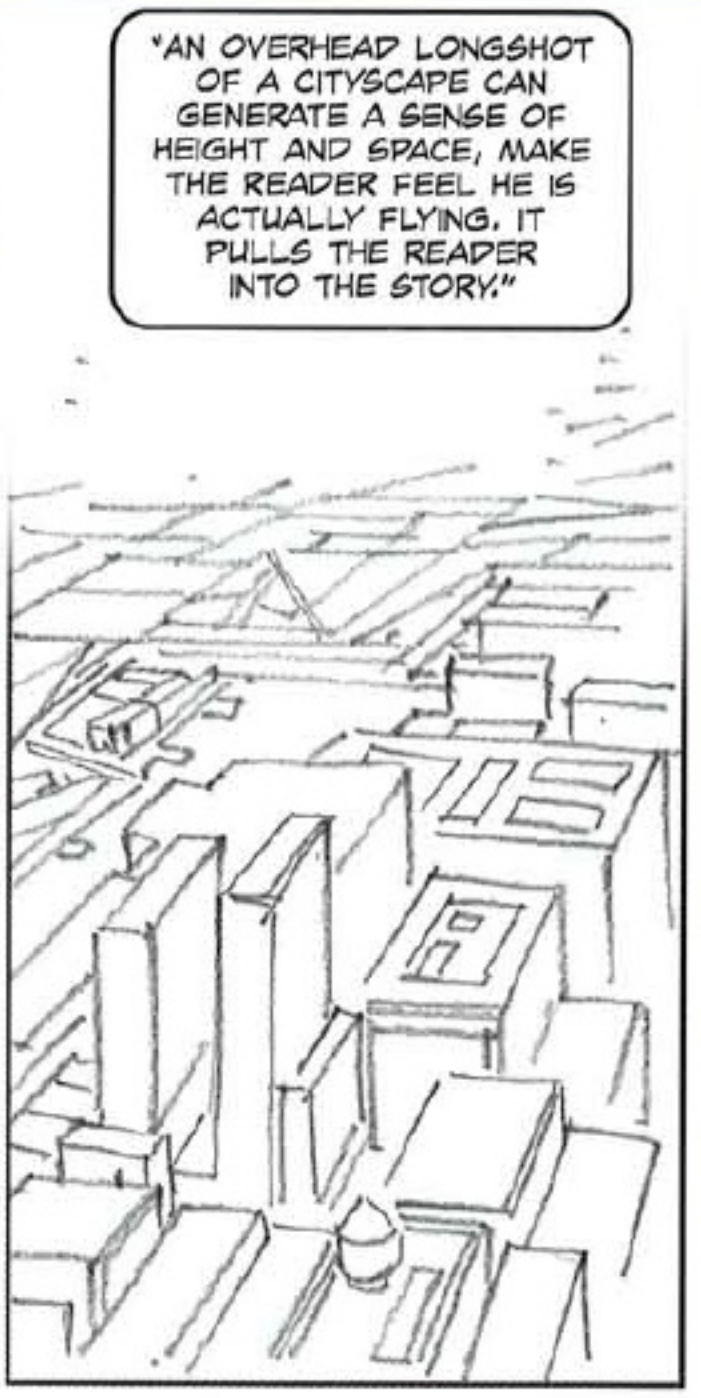
# ANGLES

**Straight-on drawings with little change of shapes or angles may be used at times, but will become boring if used too often.**



**Acute angles and extreme perspectives arouse the readers' imagination, placing him into otherwise unattainable positions and places. Especially when the drawing is done effectively.**

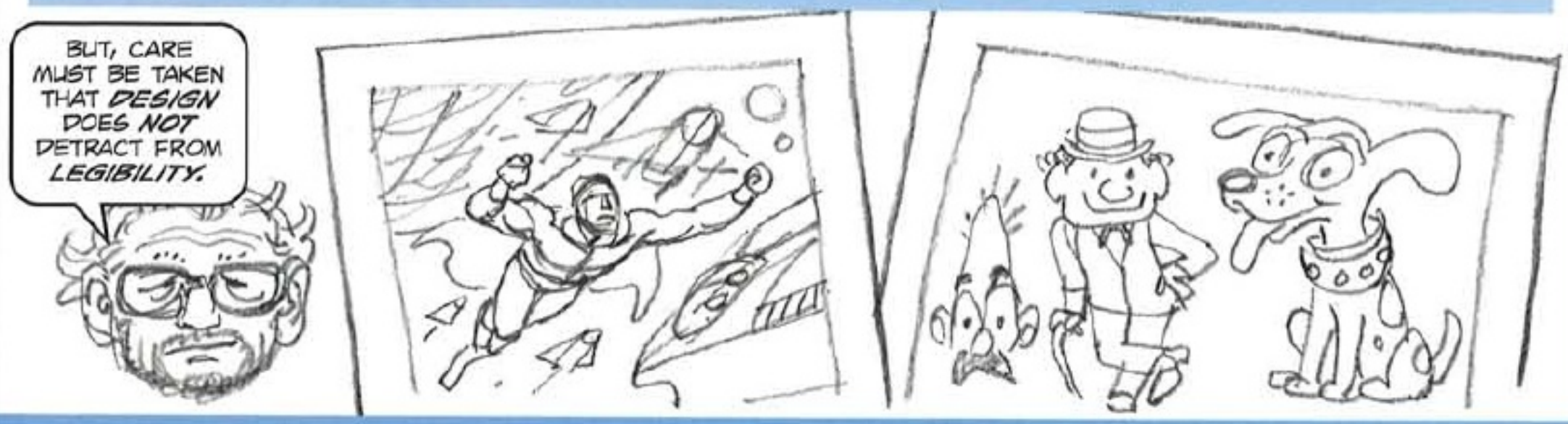





# PAGE DESIGN

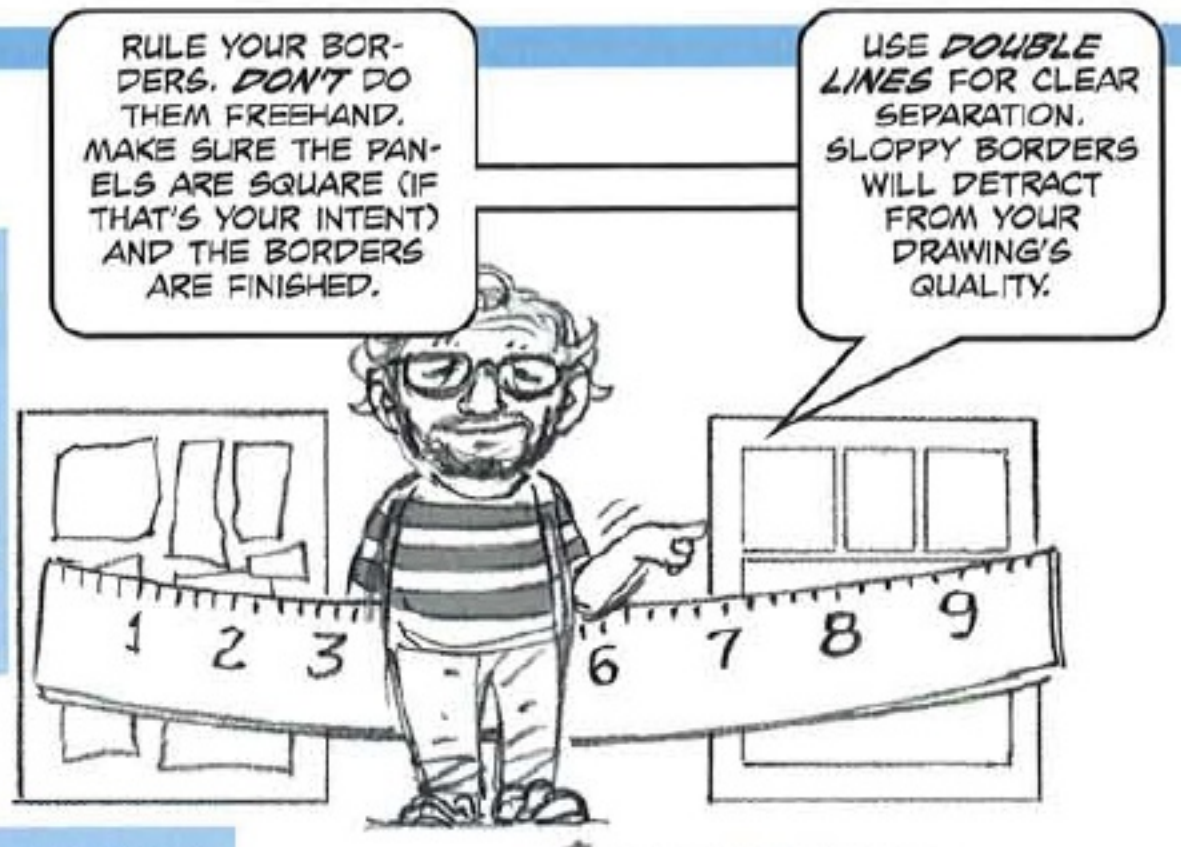
**If the design aspect makes it difficult for the reader to focus on the story intent, the artist has failed in his effort to communicate, and *communication* is the *name* of the *game*.**

***All* styles are subject to the aforementioned points. Acceptability of style is based on *quality*. The simplest cartoon style can qualify as a good form with which to tell a story. Good *simple* drawings are often more *difficult* to achieve than the more complex realistic illustrations. Yes, often *less* is *more*.**



# USEARULER

Very often, the aspiring cartoonist will rush work in anticipation of seeing the finished drawing. You do ***yourself*** a ***disservice*** if you don't take time with your thumbnails, roughs, sketching and character development. If you rush it, your work may become sloppy or lack proper finish and details. It's a bad habit to fall into and can be costly in terms of personal gratification and ability to get jobs.




# AGOODERASER

A clean page signifies that the artist cares about his work. Smears and stains give the impression that he doesn't. If you don't press too hard with your pencil, your eraser will do a good job of cleaning.

# BLUEPENCIL?

Years ago, non-reproducing blue pencils were used by many pros as a time-saving device. Since the blue lines did not photograph in the engraving process, it was unnecessary to erase the pencils (if only blue was used). Not having to erase after inking saved time, especially if the artist had 20 or 30 pages to erase.

Today, some artists use the blue pencil to do their preliminary rough layouts. They will then finish with black graphite. There are positives and negatives in this procedure. After inking, your drawings need to be erased. The ink tends to slide off the blue lines when the pencils are erased. Also, the originals don't look as sharp or as clean with the inclusion of the blue lines.

# STORYTELLING

BY MIKE WIERINGO

When I was a kid, one of the things that attracted me to comic books—besides the incredible artwork and compelling, epic stories—was the way each artist had his own way of conveying the necessary information needed to tell the story. Get it? Story-telling. An artist's storytelling style can be as unique as a fingerprint. An artist's choice of how to present the story is one of comics' most important aspects. Let's talk about some things to keep in mind when telling your stories...

## IT'SABOUTTIME...

One of the many storytelling tools a comic book artist has is the opportunity to pace a story any way he chooses. Stretching or compressing a moment or scene is something an artist can do for immediate impact, to manipulate the way a page flows for his reader. This is unique to the comic book. You don't need to rewind a tape or hit a reset button on a video game; all a reader has to do is flick his eyes back to the beginning of a scene to experience it all over again.

Here, I've taken a simple action: a fella has a ball fall on his head unexpectedly. It's a simple scene to execute, but how it's presented can make that simple scene a bit more complex. The panel where the ball actually hits this poor schnook is the crux of the scene. But adding a couple of "beats" (like "heartbeats") before and after panel three stretches out the moment, adding a bit of humor **(Figure A)**. A much more abbreviated version **(Figure B)** gets the same info across, it just takes less time to tell.

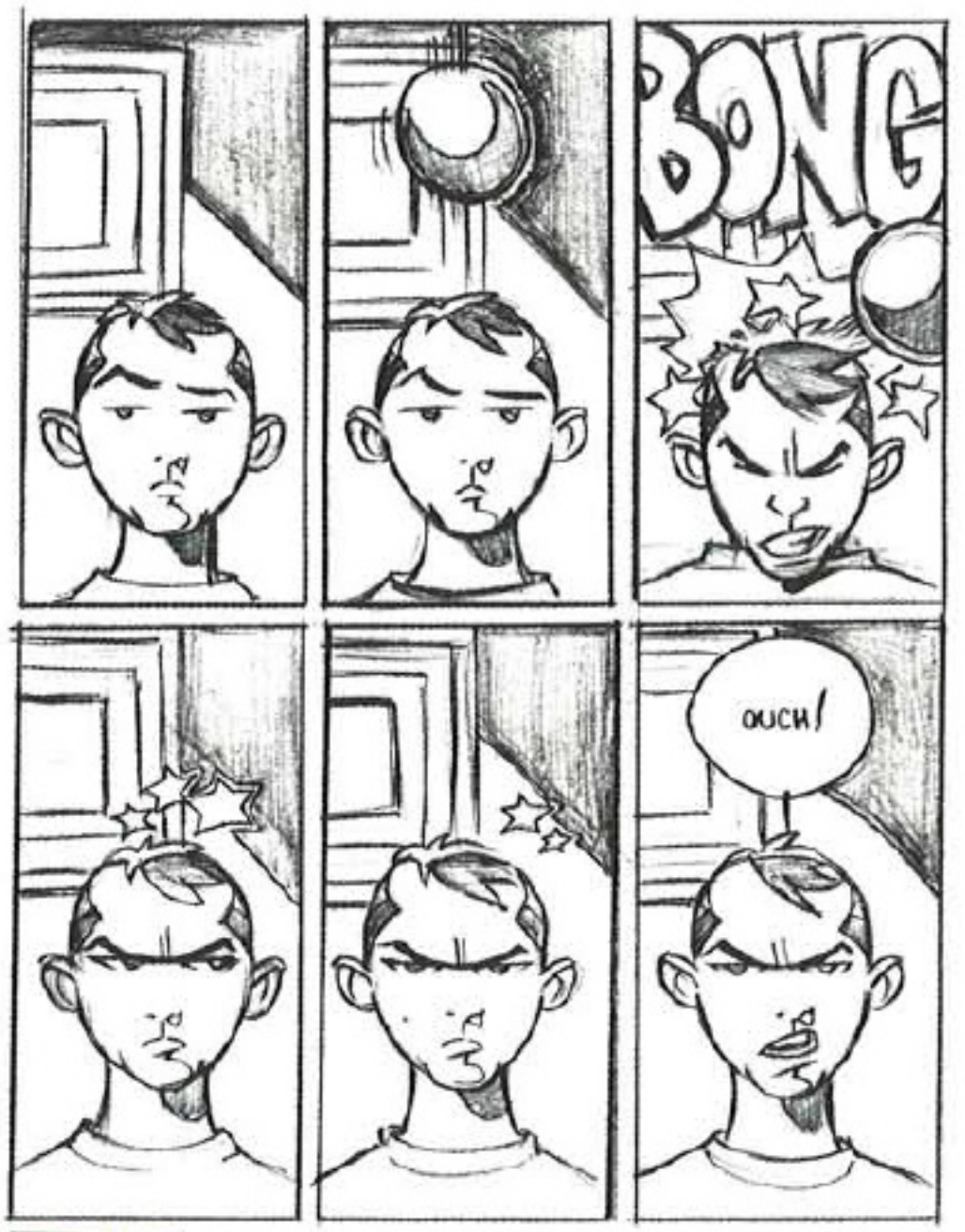



FIGURE A

FIGURE B

## SHOWWHAT?

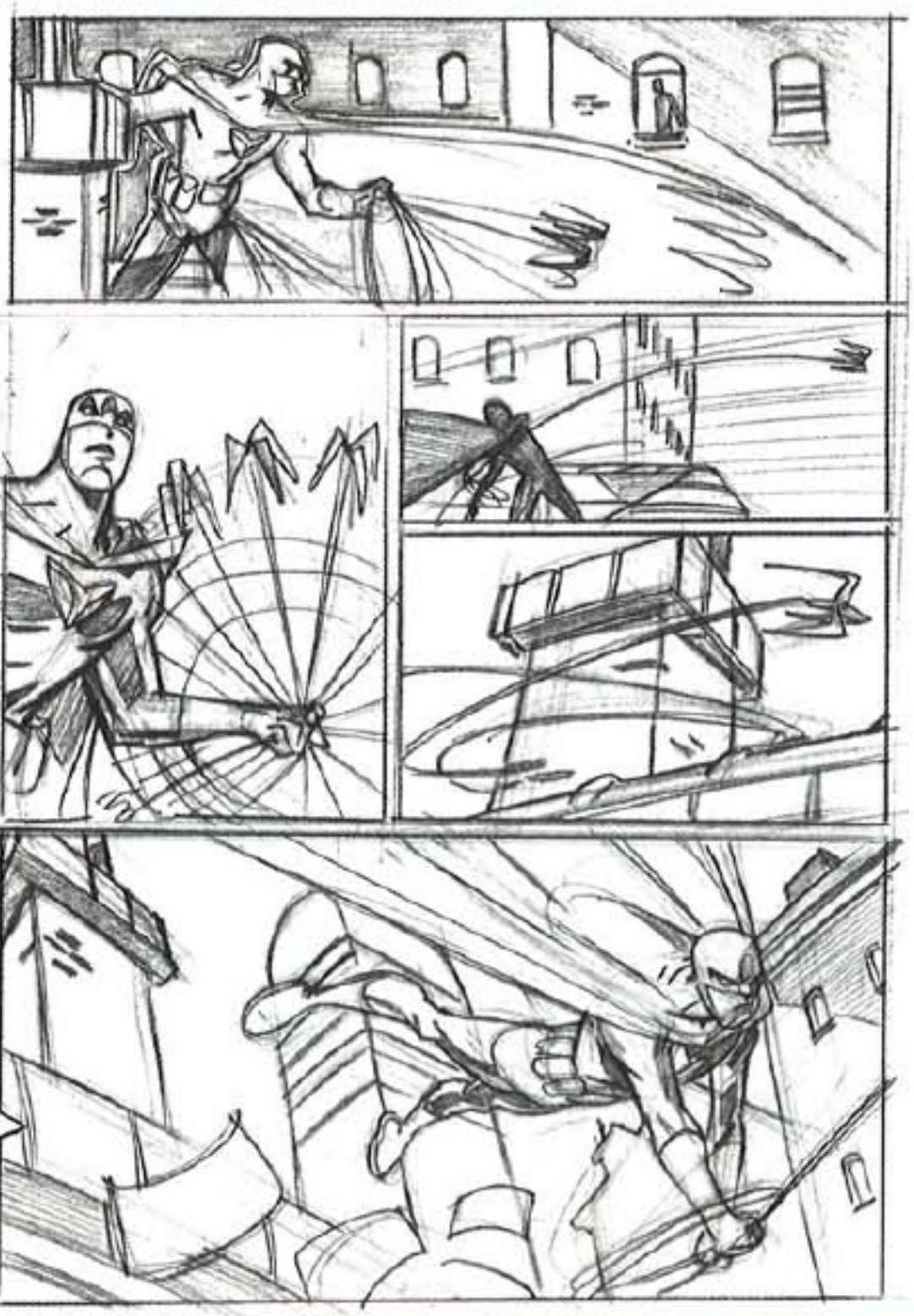
Every artist has his own way of interpreting a scene. Suppose we have a plot where the writer instructs the following: "Artist, give us a visual of our hero, the Owl, grimly swinging out off a roof over the city. Do this however you like—just establish that he's in the city, it's night, and he's just swung off the roof."

Now, some artists would take this opportunity to use the page for a big, dramatic splash, as I've done here in the example to the left. It gets across everything the writer asked for, all in one big shot. But there are a lot of other ways to tell this story.

## PRO TIPS

### HIT THE BOOKS

"You should definitely take advantage of your local library. Whenever I'm stuck for a period or style, whether it's castles, English taverns or whatever, I just look up what I need and familiarize myself with different architectural whatnots." —Gerhard, *Cerebus*



I'm from the "let's hold the reader's hand and show 'em everything" school of storytelling, so I've added the verison to the right where we see four panels of the Owl actually winding up and tossing his grappling hook to another roof and then swinging off in panel five. It isn't really necessary for the reader to see this, but I'm a big fan of animation (Disney and Japanese), and a presentation like this reminds me more of animation or storyboards for a movie.

## BLOW-BY-BLOW

Sometimes, however, what you don't show can be more effective, or have more impact, than actually showing an action. This allows readers to achieve "closure." In other words, it let's them fill in the information with their own minds. Sometimes leaving more to the imagination can be a good thing.

In the illustration to the right a hard-boiled detective-type gives some big thug a knuckle sandwich. You can see the thug recoil from the punch—you can even make out a little spit or blood. Looks like it hurts!

## OUTOFSIGHT

But what if we don't show the impact? Here you can see our detective throwing his punch, but we don't really see its effect beyond seeing the thug's hand and some stars as he gets his clock cleaned. This lets us fill in the info. For all we know, his nose is spewin' blood, his eyeballs are poppin' outta their sockets, his head's comin' completely off...well you get the idea.

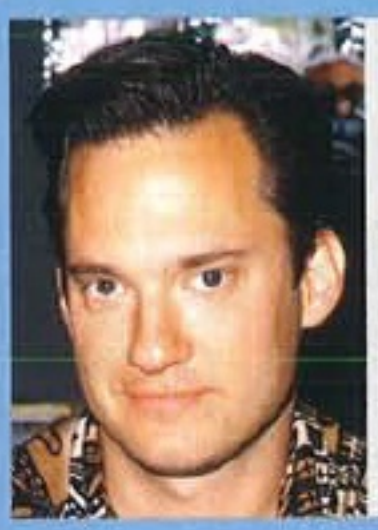
In the example below, we even apply a little of the pacing exercise—stretching the moment, while at the same time leaving the violence largely unseen. The two lugs come at each other—POW!—and the thug's flat on his back! Ol' "Mike Hammer" there's got quite a punch!

## KEEPUP THEPACE

Well, unfortunately, it looks like I'm out of space. As far as storytelling goes, this is just a microscopic fraction of what you should keep in mind. There's a reason Will Eisner wrote two books on the subject! Remember, build your own "language" as you learn the basics. Now, hit those drawing boards!

# LAYING OUT A PAGE

BY NORM BREYFOGLE



Many people may think of laying out a comic book page as the first step in doing comics. No sir! It's actually the exact midpoint of creating comics, where the story and the art first come together on the page. A good layout artist must be both visually artistic and literate.

So, let's assume you or your brother's friends have cobbled together a script. Let's also assume you've learned to draw. From life. From your imagination. You've learned about light and shadow, anatomy, perspective and composition. You've studied art history. Been there, done that? Whew! You're impressive! Now you're ready to mix all of that together on the page in a layout.

All you'll need for tools is white bond paper, light and dark drawing pencils (I personally use a 6H for the lighter stuff and an HB for the darker) and a non-photo blue pencil. Oh, you need an eraser too, unless, of course, you're Jack Kirby.

PRIME/CAPTAIN AMERICA
Jones/Captain Strazewski
Submitted to Macchio December 7, 1995

PAGE ONE

1. Establish Washington DC at night (Washington Monument, etc), maybe with full moon.
SCROLL CAPTION: Washington, D.C.
CAPTION: The hub of American government on at least TWO worlds in the multiverse.

2. Medium shot: a silhouetted Captain America races toward the fence around the White House in deep shadow. A beam of moonlight illuminates the star on his shield. (He's outside the fence.)
CAPTION: On THIS world, on THIS night, a HERO moves stealthily toward the White House...

3. Cap starts to vault the fence. We see him clearly now.
CAPTION: ...the greatest PATRIOT in his reality.
CAPTION: Perhaps in ANY reality.

4. As Cap is still at the top of the fence, in the act of vaulting, there's an energy shimmer around him, wiping out the background.
CAP, THOT: What--?!

5. Cap drops down to the White House lawn, looking a little baffled. He shakes his head.
CAP, THOT: Felt disoriented for a second--a little dizzy!
CAP, THOT: Can't worry about that now. And I still have a...

6. Small close-up: Cap startled by voice behind him.
OP BURST: FREEZE!

## READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

Read as much as possible of the entire script or plot first. You never know when a later page or issue may contradict something you drew on an earlier page or issue. Call your writers or editors if you have any questions or if you find errors and contradictions. (For the plot and panel sequence, #1 is panel one, #2 is panel two, etc.) See the sample we'll be working on to the left.

Also, make sure to gather references. If you're drawing Washington, D.C., you'd better not try to entirely fake the White House! The children's section of your local library is a great place to find photos and drawings of all kinds from around the world. Magazines and movies are another good source.

## PRO TIPS

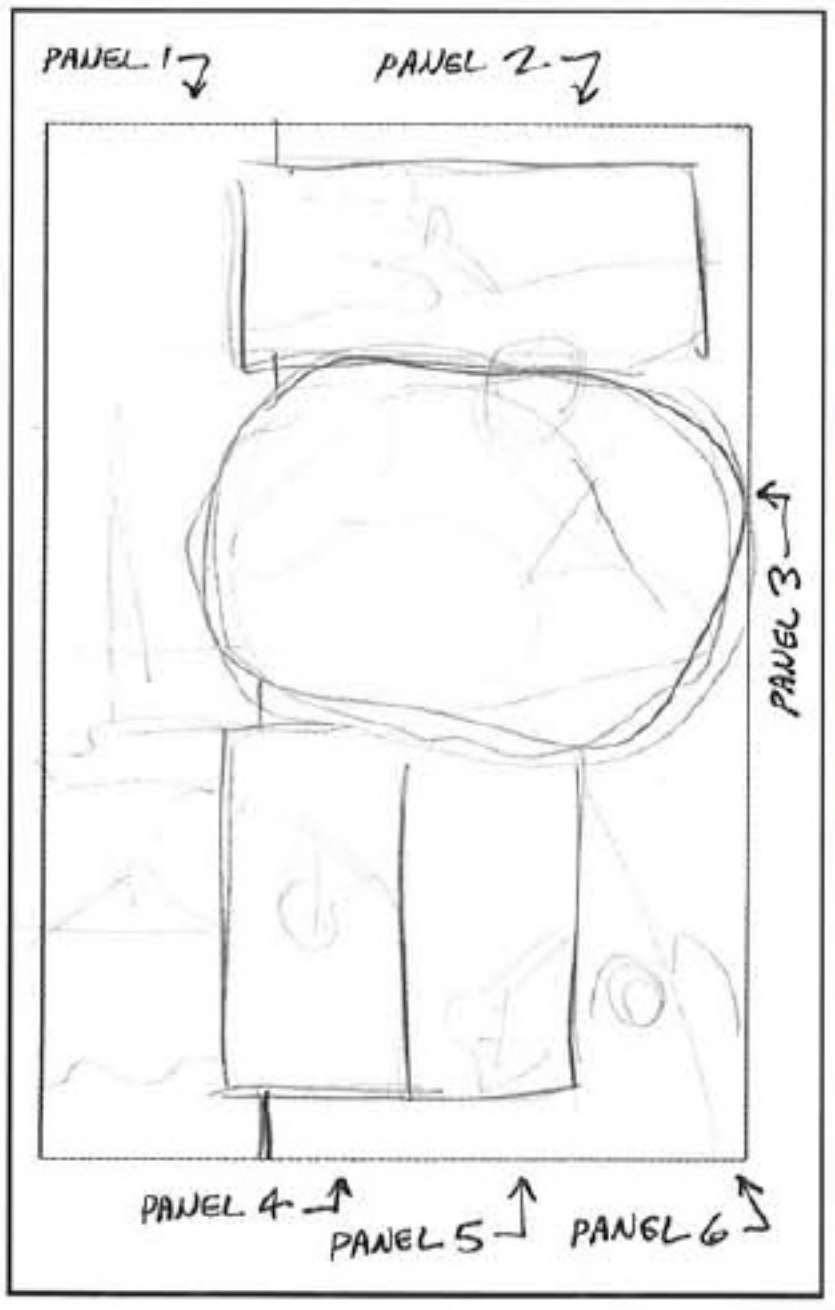
### PHOTO FINISH

"Every character in *Ex Machina* is based on someone real, who I've shot with my camera. Mayor Hundred lives across the street, my wife plays Mitchell's mother in flashbacks, my son plays young Mitchell, and Kremlin lives four doors down from me. When we get together to do the shoots, I give the script out to each person, and everyone's reading their dialogue to get the facial expressions emoted properly." —Tony Harris, *Ex Machina*

## THE SIZE OF IT

Decide what size you'll draw your layouts. Generally, a smaller size saves time by making it easier for corrections (rather than dirtying up the final art paper), and to see the entire page design at a glance. I draw my layouts at a size of 4" x 6" on regular white paper.

MARVEL, CAPTAIN AMERICA ™ & © 2005 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.




## I'MREADYFORMY CLOSE-UP,MR.SPIELBERG

Now you're ready to concentrate on an individual page. Visualize the scene or scenes in your mind's eye and choose which elements require the greatest "emphasis." Start roughing in panel borders with the 6H pencil by deciding how much of the page area you'll be devoting to each panel (see the thumbnail to the left). Generally, a larger panel indicates greater emphasis. How do you know which panels to emphasize? Well, you basically have artistic license to decide which panel should stand out the most. Panel 3, featuring Cap, was the most dramatic shot on the page, so I drew it big, making as much room as possible by shrinking the other panels (see layout below). Don't worry, you'll probably have to go back and erase a number of other panels until you're happy with the basic layout.

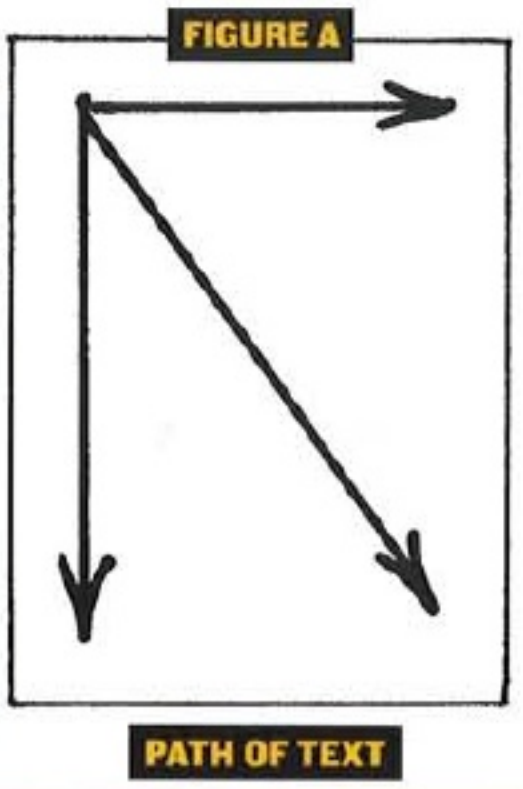
## KEEPYOUR THUMBNAILSCLEAN

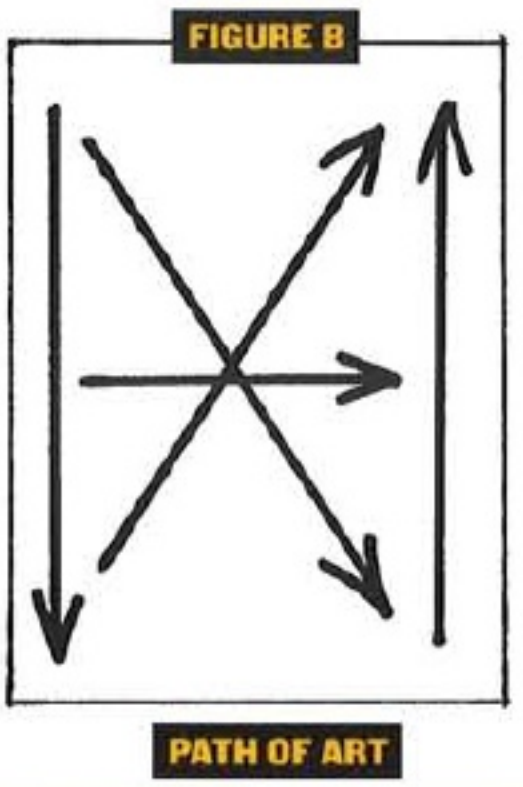
Here's where all those years of studying art start to come in handy. Still using the 6H pencil, begin drawing the general gestures of the objects and figures in your panels where your "visualization" of them is most clear.

You also have to sketch in captions and word balloons in blue pencil—the blue pencil prevents them from being confused with the drawing lines. Copy (a.k.a. words) should be considered part of the page design, since it takes up space. This is why I prefer working from a full script, as opposed to the "Marvel method" of creating the plot first, then the art, then adding the dialogue last. That runs the risk of having a large word balloon—which you didn't plan for—cover up important art and destroy the overall page design.

## EASYREADER

Strive for readability on a page and in individual panels. Readable storytelling is the mark of a good layout. **Figure A** shows the most readable paths for consecutive word balloons and captions. **Figure B** shows the most readable paths for movement in the art. Note that the art is more flexible in its range of readable paths than the copy (prose language is more formally structured than visual language), but a left-to-right movement is favored over right-to-left, because the story's inevitable end is always to the far "right" (i.e., the last page of the book). Plus your eye is trained to move from left to right.



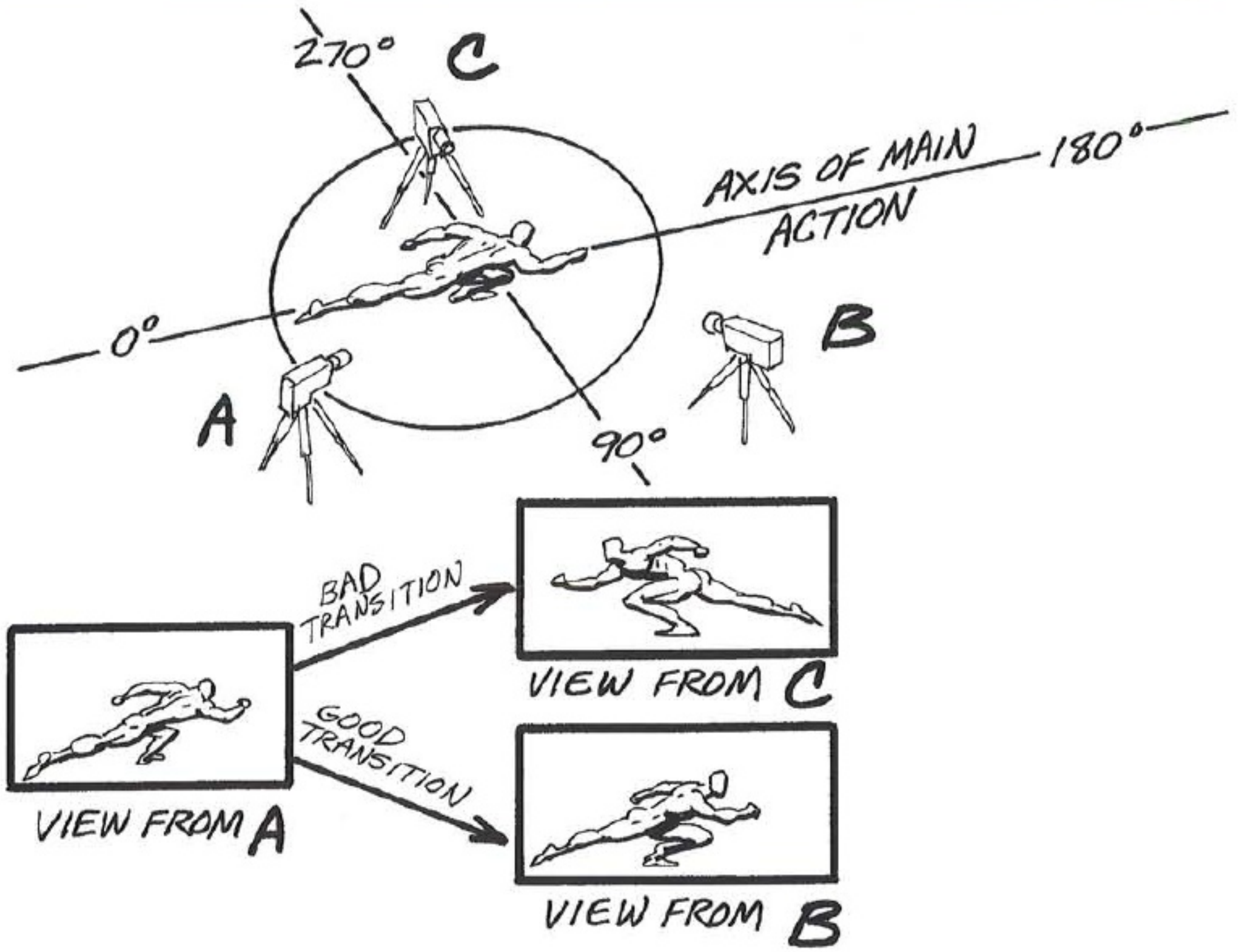



# LAYINGOUTAPAGE

## TURNAROUND,REALCAREFUL-LIKE

Make sure you always observe the 180-degree rule, as depicted below. In transition between panels, don't cross the "axis of action" or you'll get a confusing "flip-flop" effect. It will look like all the action has suddenly reversed its direction!

For example, if you start your panel angle with Camera A (seen below), and swing counterclockwise to Camera B, you don't want to continue over to Camera C. If you cross over from Camera B to Camera C, you reverse the direction of action, halting any sort of flow in your panel layout.




## STORYTELLINGRULES

The trickiest part of laying out a page is actually deciding where to put everything. So, I racked my brain and came up with a number of storytelling rules (besides the readability and 180-degree ones) that I seem to follow both consciously and subconsciously.

- Establish the scene first, or at least early in the sequence, so readers have a sense of an environment and know where the action is taking place.
- Copy (lettering) is part of design and must adhere to all storytelling rules.
- With superheroes/action-adventure: Draw as "big" and as "in your face" as possible (large figures, exaggerated gestures, foreshortening, etc.). It's more eye-catching and dynamic!
- Make sure characters look and act "in character." Pay close attention to body language. A layout artist must be an actor too! (Not to mention set director, clothing designer, etc....)
- Alter the script if it improves readability. Just be sure to get approval from your editor or the writer first!
- Use the right amount of panels per scene. Don't overuse splashes or quick cuts (jumping from one scene to another, then another)—they lose their emotional effectiveness if used too often. You'll discover your own rhythm or style as you gain experience on this point.
- Use weird panel shapes only if the script specifically calls for it (or you think the story does), and it doesn't decrease readability. I took this liberty in the fourth panel because the script mentioned an energy shimmer that wiped out the background.
- Be aware of—and use appropriately—similar and different "camera angle" sequences for different psychological effects. Check out the last panel on the page, where the close-up "camera angle" focuses the attention on Cap's state of surprise. Again, you'll develop your own rhythm in time.
- Overlapping panels can create an illusion of more space on the page. In panel three, Cap's body overlaps other panels on the page, helping to "open up" the entire page.

## DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS

Since you've just gotten the main elements roughed in, this is the best time to make any changes to your layout design, to better make it fit your knowledge (reference, experience, storytelling rules, etc.). It'll be a lot harder to change anything (and it'll cost you more time) after you've gone to the final art paper. At this stage, I usually put a lot of detail in with the darker HB pencil. Since I enlarge my thumbnails with an art projector right onto the final art paper, this saves me time and effort that'd otherwise be required after I've enlarged the picture. Most artists, however, use thumbnails merely as a guide and then actually draw their page on the final paper. Whatever you choose, tighten up your pencils and don't forget those details.

## ALLLAIDOUT

And there you have it. Your finished piece on 11" x 17" Bristol board paper, inked and everything. Now, there are many other ways to produce a layout that vary from my personal method. Arguably, however, most of the storytelling rules, although flexible, are pretty much universal. If you're an artist that cares about storytelling, the layout is the most important stage in drawing good comics, riding as it does on the razor's edge between writer and artist. A good layout artist is a good visualizer, a good translator of prose language into visual language, and a good bridge between the sometimes conflicting expressions of literature and art. Oh, and feel free to break most of these "rules" once you've truly understood them!

Dream big!

*Norm Breyfogle has penciled everything from DC's* **Batman** *to Dark Horse's* **The Escapist.**

## CHAPTER SIX: PART 4

# PANEL LAYOUT

BY TERRY DODSON

Hi Terry Dodson here, artist on such projects as *Marvel Knights Spider-Man, Trouble, Harley Quinn* and *Generation X. Wizard*'s asked me to give you a lesson on panel and page layout, so I decided to go with a character everyone's familiar with—good ol' Spider-Man. Laying out the panels of a comic page is an art form, but as with all the topics in this book, with practice you'll get better and better.

So, here we go. These are some of the steps I take while laying out an actual comic page panel by panel, and the reasons behind the choices I ultimately have to make.

## THESCRIPT

Here's Mark Millar's full script to *Marvel Knights Spider-Man* #1, page 5. Mark does a great job of showing everything that needs to be shown. Plus, all the dialogue is there, so you can leave plenty of space for word balloons and use the balloons as design elements in the panels.

## TEMPLATES

Here's the page template I've used for the Marvel Knights Spider-Man series (**Figure A**). It's a widescreen, cinematic type of layout I first noticed being used by Rob Haynes on *Daredevil: Ninja* and see monthly now in Bryan Hitch's *Ultimates*. Mark really wanted to tell a more mature, darker type of story, and I felt this style of layout would work perfectly.

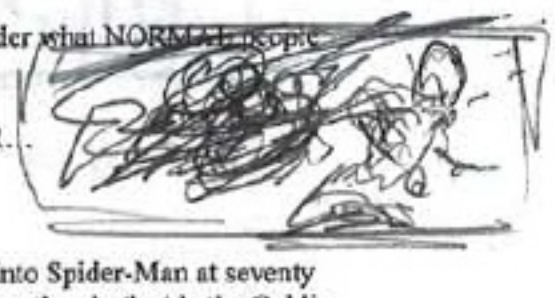
When you want to do an establishing shot, I like to use **Figure B**, where the first panel bleeds off the page. I think this makes the reader immediately notice something different is up. **Figure C** is a variation where there are two small actions that don't require a full panel, or you have a big action or a hero shot, or a combination of both. After reading through the script, I see that it's clear that four panels of action will work for this page, and so I switch to a page template something like **Figure D**.

**Page Five**

1
Cut back to the alley as the Goblin zips across the ground towards us here, squatting down like a quarterback on his glider and ready to take down the woozy, barely conscious Spider-Man he seems to be wiping the floor with. Spidey really looks an absolute mess by this point.

CAPTION — For a fraction of a second, I wonder what NORMAL people do on Sunday mornings.

GREEN GOBLIN — BIG, DEEP BREATH, PARKER...



2
Cut to outside the alley and we see the Goblin running into Spider-Man at seventy miles an hour and charging him back through the street as they both ride the Goblin Glider from the left to the right of the panel. Reaction from early-morning pedestrians and jolts from cars that suddenly stop to let them both zip past, struggling in this mid-air battle that's taking place just a couple of feet from the ground.

CAPTION — Are they blinking at their radio-alarms? Are they nuzzling into their wives? Are they having their lips broken by some old friend of the family dressed-up in a rubber costume?

3
Impact shot as they both hit a passing car and Spider-Man is ridden into the windshield, smashing it into a thousand tiny pieces.

CAPTION — Or is that just ME?

4
Cut to car interior and the driver covers his face as a million little fragments of the windscreen shatter in towards him. Really go for realism here. All the little details are what matter. Make this as close to the real world and a real world environment as you possibly can. Colours should be muted throughout the whole issue. Likewise, people should be dressed and look as people dress and look in real life. Keep the bystanders young and trendy. Make everyone look like students.

NO DIALOGUE

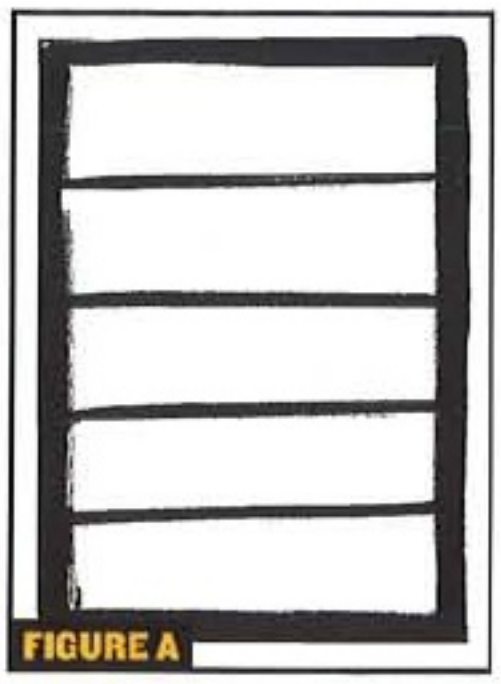


FIGURE A

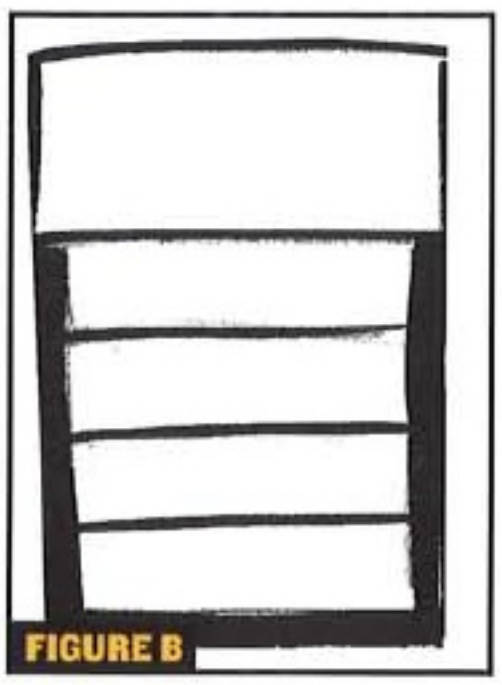


FIGURE B

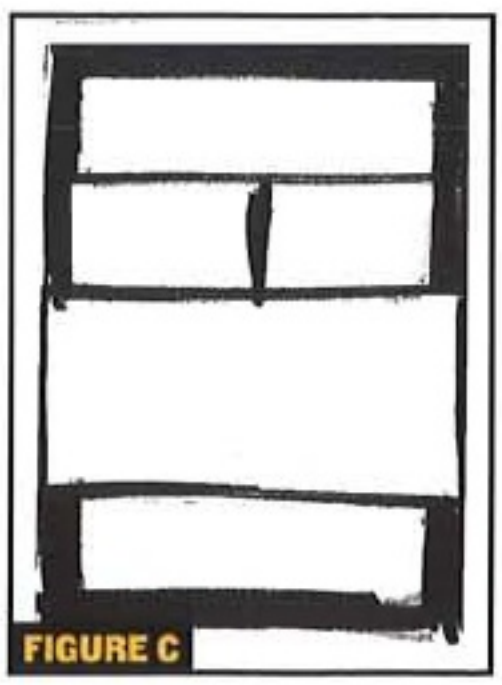


FIGURE C

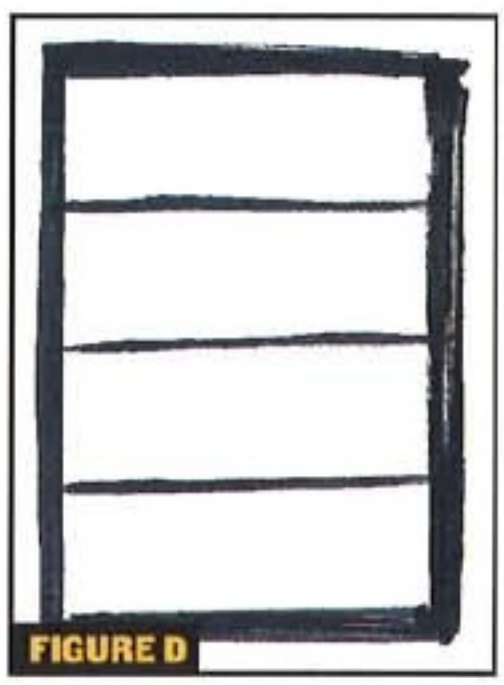


FIGURE D

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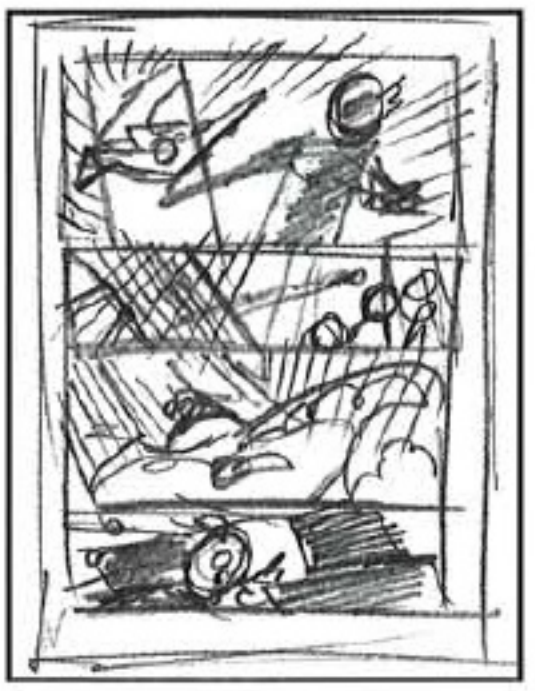
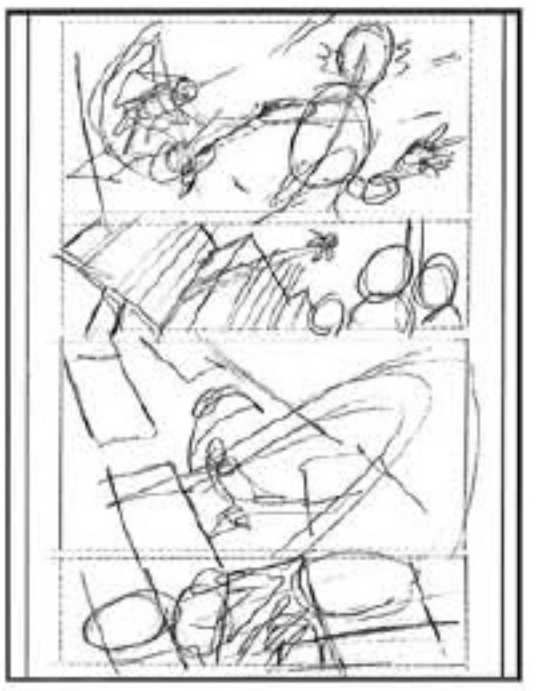




## THETHUMBNAILS

I draw my initial thumbnails as small as possible (2" x 3") in order to be able to see the whole thing at once. Also, by doing such small pencil drawings, I don't get attached to them and am more able to alter the drawings later.

The first panel is a medium shot, shot at a slight up angle to feel the menace of the Green Goblin. I enlarge the panel size since we need to see good establishments of both main characters for the next few pages. The second panel I thin down to expand the horizontal movement of the Goblin. The third panel is enlarged because so much information is needed to convey, and we get a cool shot of Spidey and Goblin with different size figures to make the page look more interesting. Finally, in the last panel I went inside the car to really feel the impact of Goblin and Spidey.

## PENCILING

Once I'm happy with the thumbnails, I begin roughing in the page full size. I compare the thumbnails to the actual page making sure everything relates, double-checking for word balloon space, etc. A lot of pencilers actually enlarge their thumbnails from the small size to full size and then trace them off, but I really enjoy drawing full size and trying to capture the essence of the initial little drawings.

Next, I start working on the first panel at the top of the page. You can start with the panel that excites you most; however, working top to bottom, left to right prevents smearing. I find the horizon line and all the perspective points in the panel, then draw in a perspective grid based on those points, with light blue pencil (Figure E). A lot of times the grid helps solve drawing and compositional problems by just having "something" in the panel. After that, I rough in the figure in blue pencil (Figure F) before moving on to the final pencils (Figure G). In this sequence, a lot of the figure is unseen and goes into the other panel. Go ahead and draw right into that next panel. Don't guess; just draw it now and erase it later.

FIGURE E

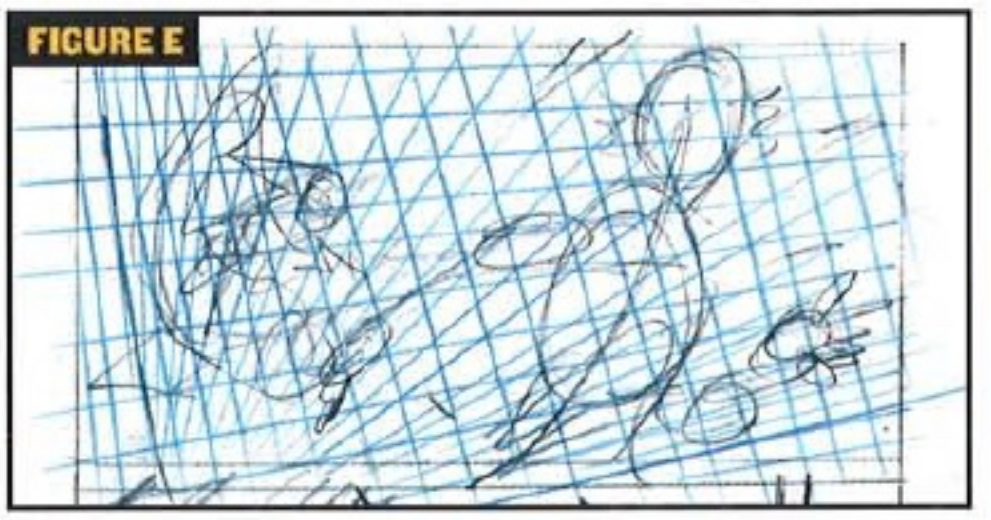


FIGURE F

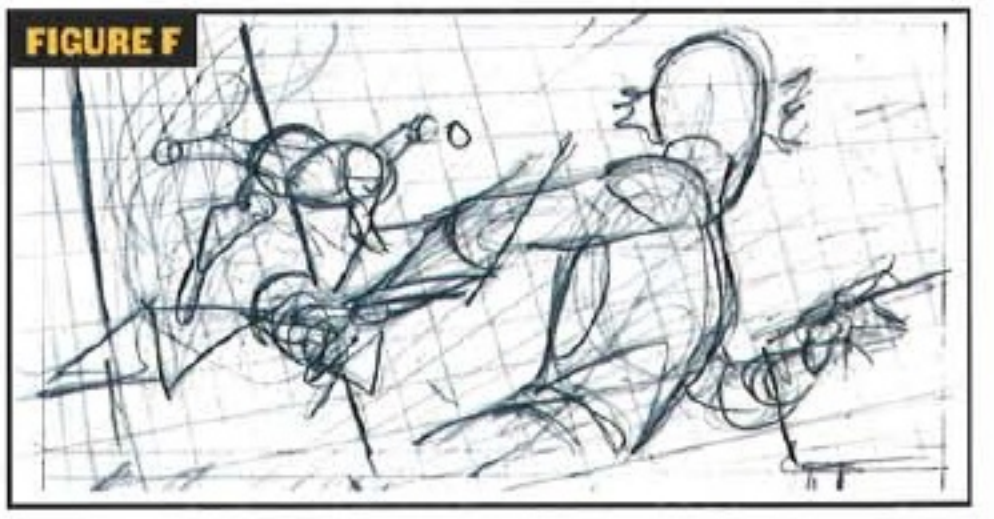
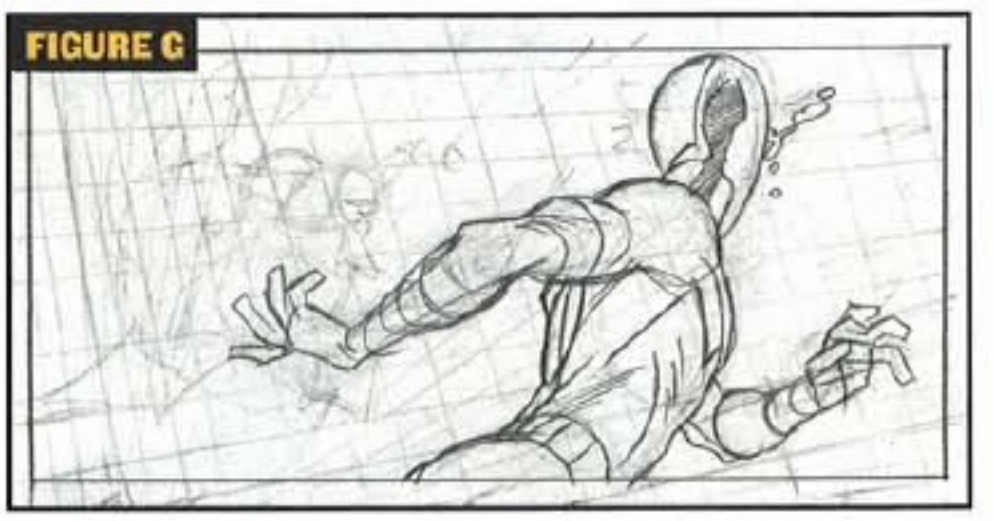


FIGURE G



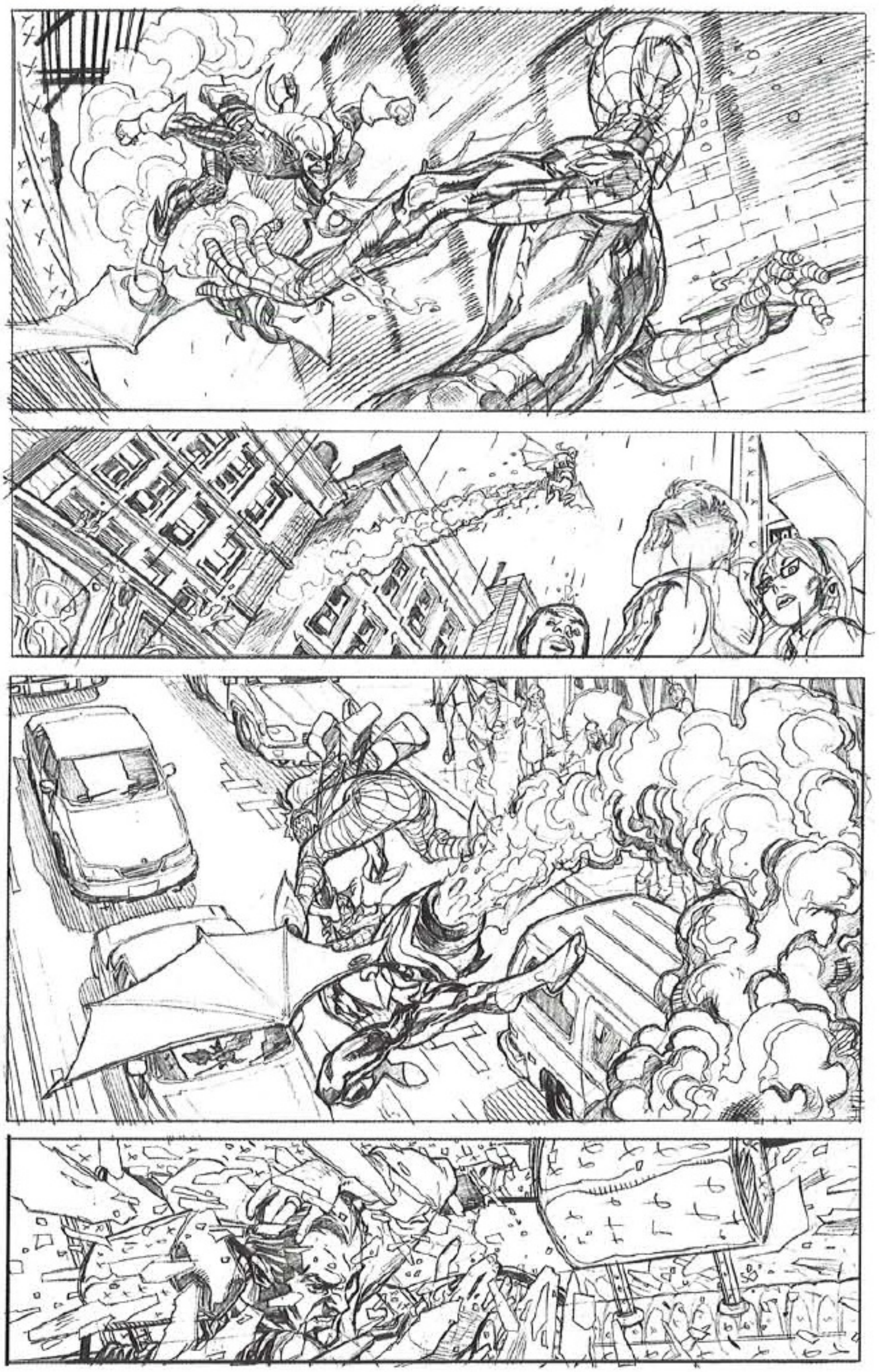
## THEDETAILS

After I'm satisfied with construction of the drawing, I erase it with a gray kneaded eraser (which leaves the "ghost" of a drawing behind) and then draw in borders. The panel borders give me restricted space and limitations to draw in. I do the finer line work with an HB pencil.

I then finish penciling, add blacks and background details (Figure H). In this particular panel, I ended up changing the typical perspective I had been using and used a "curved" perspective on the background to really feel the power of the Goblin's glider. Also, I decided to use mostly speedlines to define the background instead of the actual building lines for the same purpose.

FIGURE H

# PANEL LAYOUT



# THE FINAL PAGE

After I complete the first panel, I go ahead and repeat the process for the rest of the page.

Eventually, we're left with the final pencils ready for the inks. No major changes from my thumbnails. The great thing about thumbnails is if you make all your mistakes at the small size you don't have to worry about it at the full size. The only thing left is the good part, the drawing!

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*Terry Dodson has laid the groundwork for a stellar career on titles such as* Marvel Knights Spider-Man *and* Harley Quinn.

# DRAMATIC TENSION

BY JIM CALAFIORE

I'm a manipulator.

No, I don't mean that kind of manipulation, (though my wife is nodding in enthusiastic agreement); I manipulate the reader. That's my job. That's the job of any storyteller, writers and artists—to manipulate the reader into whatever emotional state is necessary for a particular scene to have impact.

The best tool we manipulators have is pacing—how we let the scene play out for the reader. We're in control of the story, and thus (hopefully) in control of the reader. If we do our job right, the reader will follow us and the story almost anywhere. If not, we're lost and the reader isn't going to keep turning the pages.

## FUTURETENSE

Tension at its simplest is about anticipation: setting up a potential event in the mind of the reader, and then making them wait as long as possible before getting to the actual event. The event is the payoff, but the tension is in the moments before. And that's where to concentrate on hooking the reader and reeling him in.

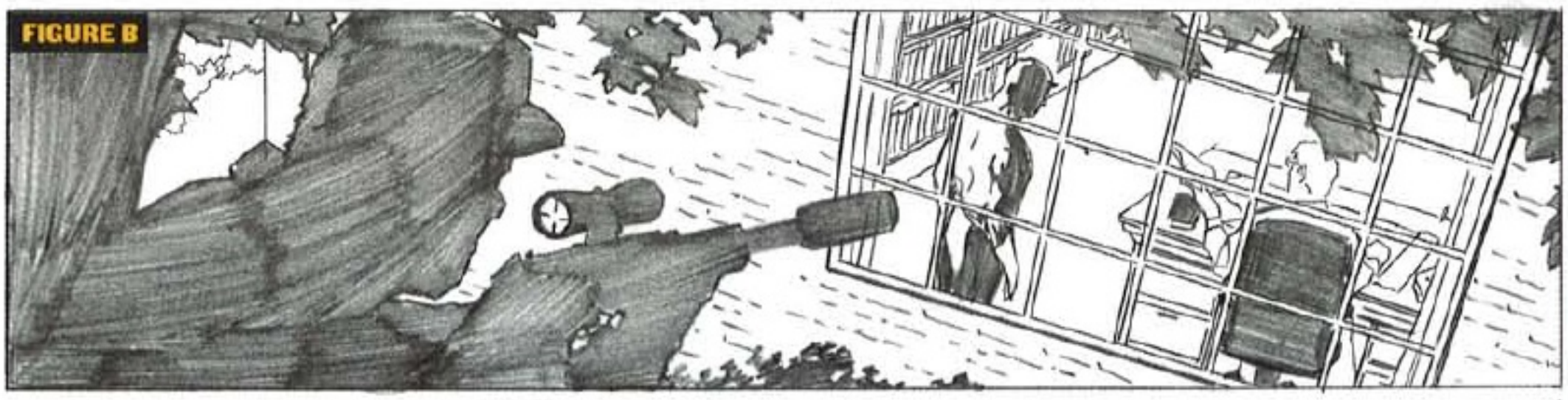
Creating a tense situation is the writer's task. Mine is to make it last, even when, unfortunately, there's often only a single page to do that in; sometimes even less.

FIGURE A

Here are two establishing shots. The first (**Figure A**): A sniper crouches, rifle with silencer at the ready. Tense, yes, and setting a mood, but I want to get more information in to the establishing shot, especially if the length of the scene is a factor.

The second shot (**Figure B**) adds in Daredevil and Ben Urich, and gives us some perspective on the situation. But this single panel probably isn't going to carry all the tension we want to create. What we can do to turn it into a scene?

FIGURE B



MARVEL, DAREDEVIL, BEN URICH ™ & © 2005 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

# DRAMATICTENSION

## THESHOWDOWN

This first example is a duel scenario: *Two gunfighters stand in the middle of a deserted street, hands poised above their holstered guns, waiting for either to make the first move.* A showdown.

This pacing is a variation on that. Simply put, the protagonist (Daredevil) is completely aware of the antagonist (the Sniper) and his intentions. Daredevil sees the potential event coming before the Sniper takes action; I want the reader to stay in that moment, to live it as long as possible. Anticipation.

The moment is only a split second in this case. I need to extend the moment artificially. In a film, the director accomplishes this by using slow motion, but we can't do that in a comic book since we're dealing with static images. The solution is to stretch time out by adding panels, small insets of various details.

As you can see, I'm not using the term "showdown" literally since this isn't a duel. I'm using it to refer to a scenario where two or more characters are aware of each other and the potential event at the same time.

# CAUSEANDEFFECT

In the next example, I've situated the tension in the moment between the potential event and the action causing it. Cause and effect: *The dastardly villain has tied the helpless girl to the tracks in front of an oncoming locomotive; will our hero be able to save her before the train slices her into three, easy-to-carry pieces?*

Here, the Sniper fires immediately. Will DD be able to save his target, Ben Urich?

In both these first two examples, I'm telescoping time, making the instant I've chosen last longer than real time by adding panels. To the reader, often subconsciously, panels equal time. More panels, more time.

Also note that in both I've used a somewhat unconventional panel alignment. It slows the eye down, making the reader work a little harder, which I've found helps to stretch time. (The extreme close-ups of details have a similar effect.)

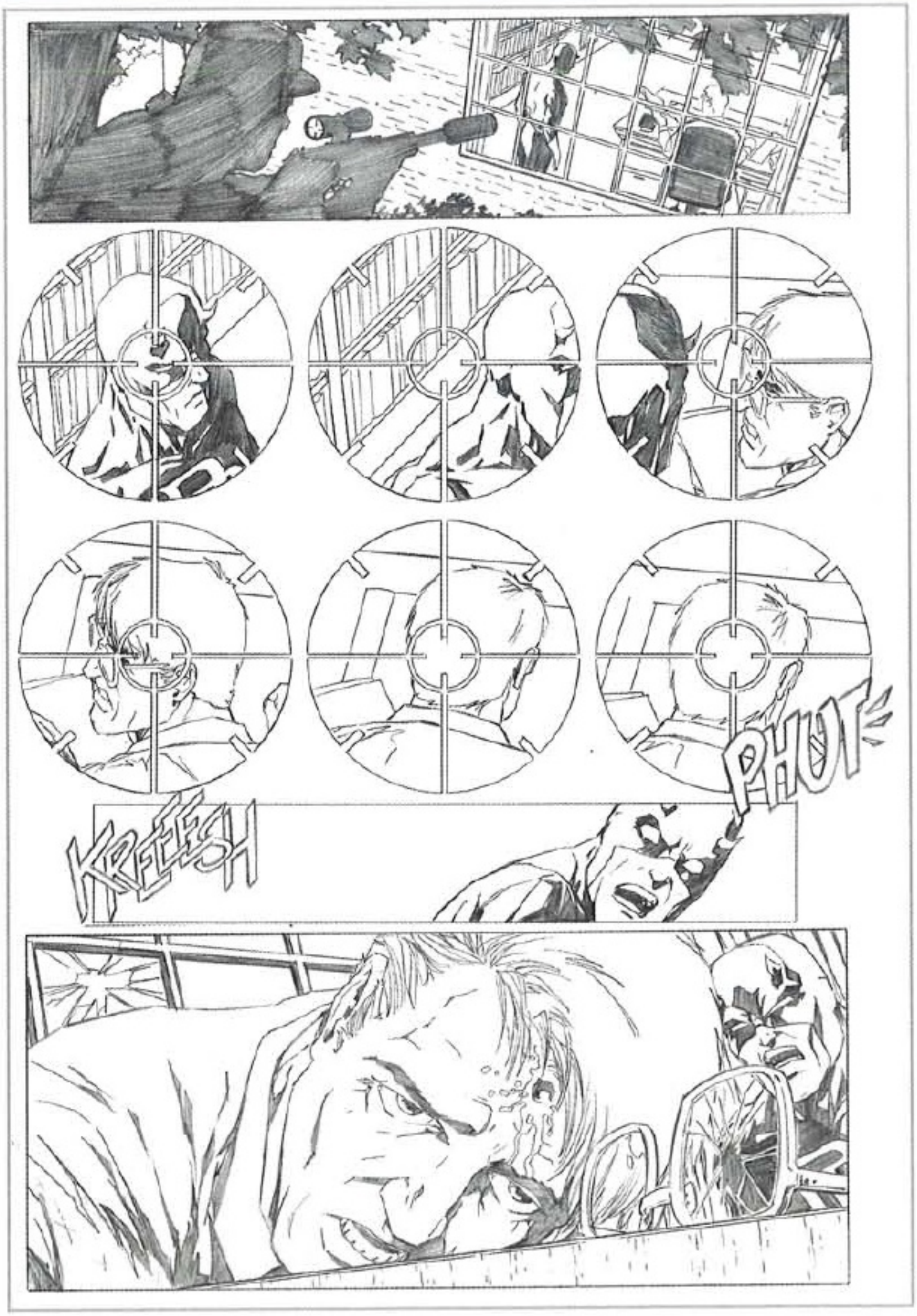
In panel eight, I've added information: Urich doesn't know he's about to lose some gray matter. Adding visual information during the tense moments is a good idea, but you have to be careful. Too much, especially if it's not pertinent to the tension, can diffuse it.

# THEUNKNOWN

Here, I've gone back to the establishing shot for a different aspect of the tension: The protagonist has absolutely no knowledge of the antagonist's intended action. (We're the only ones aware of the potential event.)

I've not really added any new information, but kept the point of view from the Sniper, using the gun-sight panels to retain a "being watched" feel. In fact, we are the Sniper. Also, I've left the target up in the air, focusing on Daredevil, not settling on Urich until the last "gun-sight" panels. Uncertainty always adds spice to a tension stew.

In cases like this where there's no need to distort time, I can play out the tension as long as I want, but again it's tricky. Too long could dissipate the tension.




**AS A LAST EXAMPLE** I offer a suggestion: Watch "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly," specifically the final showdown, and see how long the director stretches the tension before anyone fires their gun. Watch the scene, and think about how each shot is fairly static. He's using "panels" to extend the moment, the anticipation.

Anticipation. That's what it's all about.

# PACING BY JIM CALAFIORE

Hey, Jim Calafiore here. In previous columns, I've briefly mentioned the importance of mood, but now let's examine it a little more closely.

What we're looking at this time is how to set up a mood in the first page of a scene (if you haven't done it in the first page...well, you're in trouble). There are several important components to this, camera angle and lighting being two, but what I find most important is pacing. How is the page laid out? How is the situation presented to the reader? Does the pacing involve the reader in the scene? Depending on the script, a good deal of this could be left up to you, the artist.

## CHECKTHESCRIPT

A very tight script, broken down page by page, panel by panel and with camera angles specified, determines the pacing already. In that case, the writer does this work for you. On the other hand, loose plots leave a lot up to the artist. So let's assume that's what we're working with. Here's the scenario:

"The HULK kneels on the ground, cradling the bloodied body of BETTY, surrounded by several of his most fearsome foes (ABOMINATION, RHINO, WENDIGO and JUGGERNAUT). BETTY's blood stains the ground around them. HULK's head hangs down as he speaks softly to BETTY; tears roll from his eyes. Finally, he raises his head in anguished rage towards his enemies."

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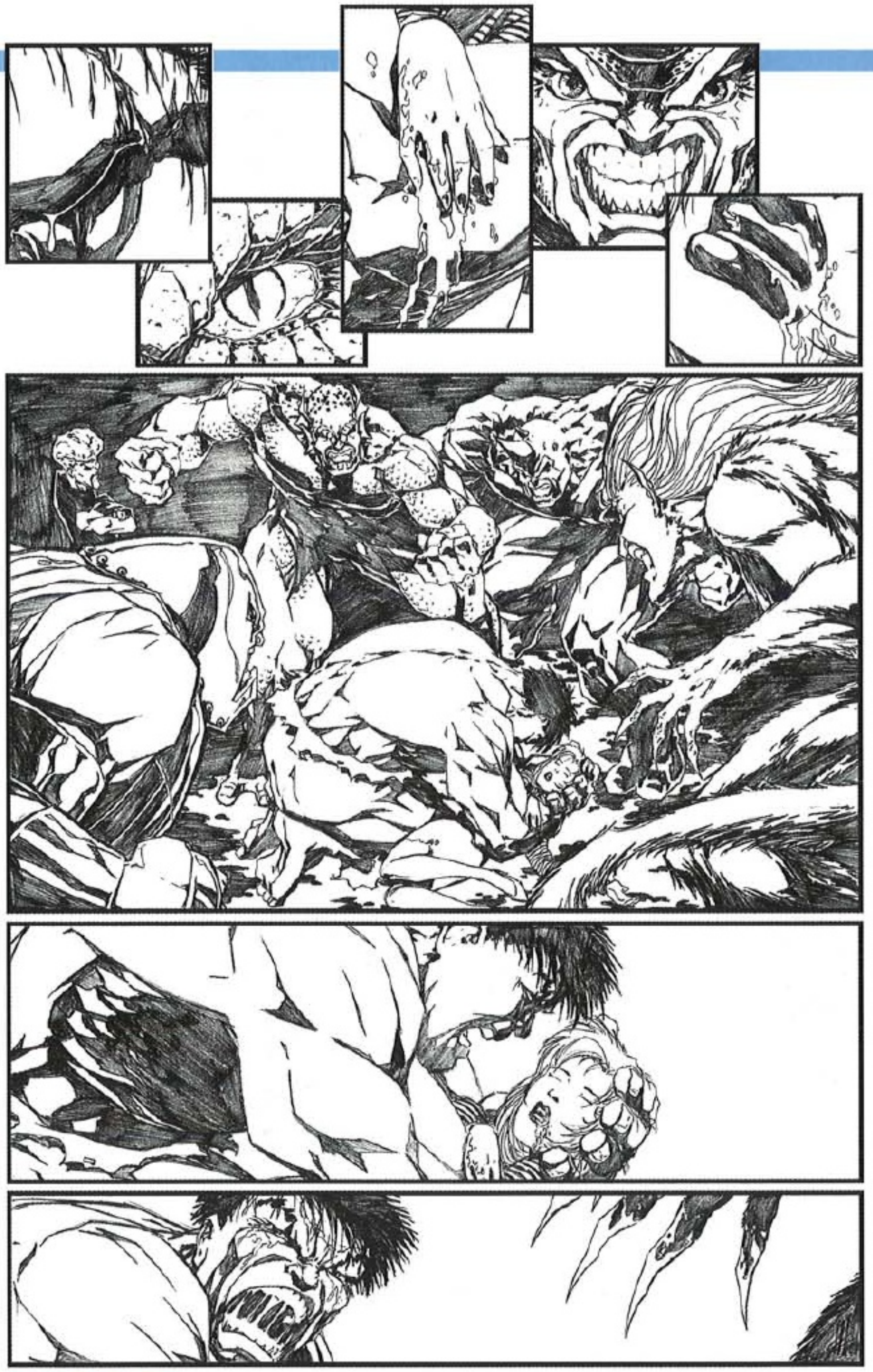
## SURROUNDED

One of the keys in pacing and mood is the establishing shot and how it's used. Generally, every scene needs one (see one of my other lessons, "Settings," on page 123), but every scene doesn't use the establishing shot in the same way. Here's ours. As you can see, it has all the basic information necessary to set the scene. Now what do we do with it?

## SMASHCUT

This first example is a conventional approach. The establishing shot is the first panel, giving the reader just about all the visual information he needs when he enters the page. It's a quick start for the scene, and gets the reader right into it. I consider this a "smash cut" method of setting the mood and pace, with the information "up front" for clarity. The drawback here is that it doesn't involve the reader a great deal. Beyond the visual itself, the pacing doesn't "compel" him into the scene since it's all right there. This puts a lot of pressure on the dialogue to reinforce the mood.



## YOUTEASE

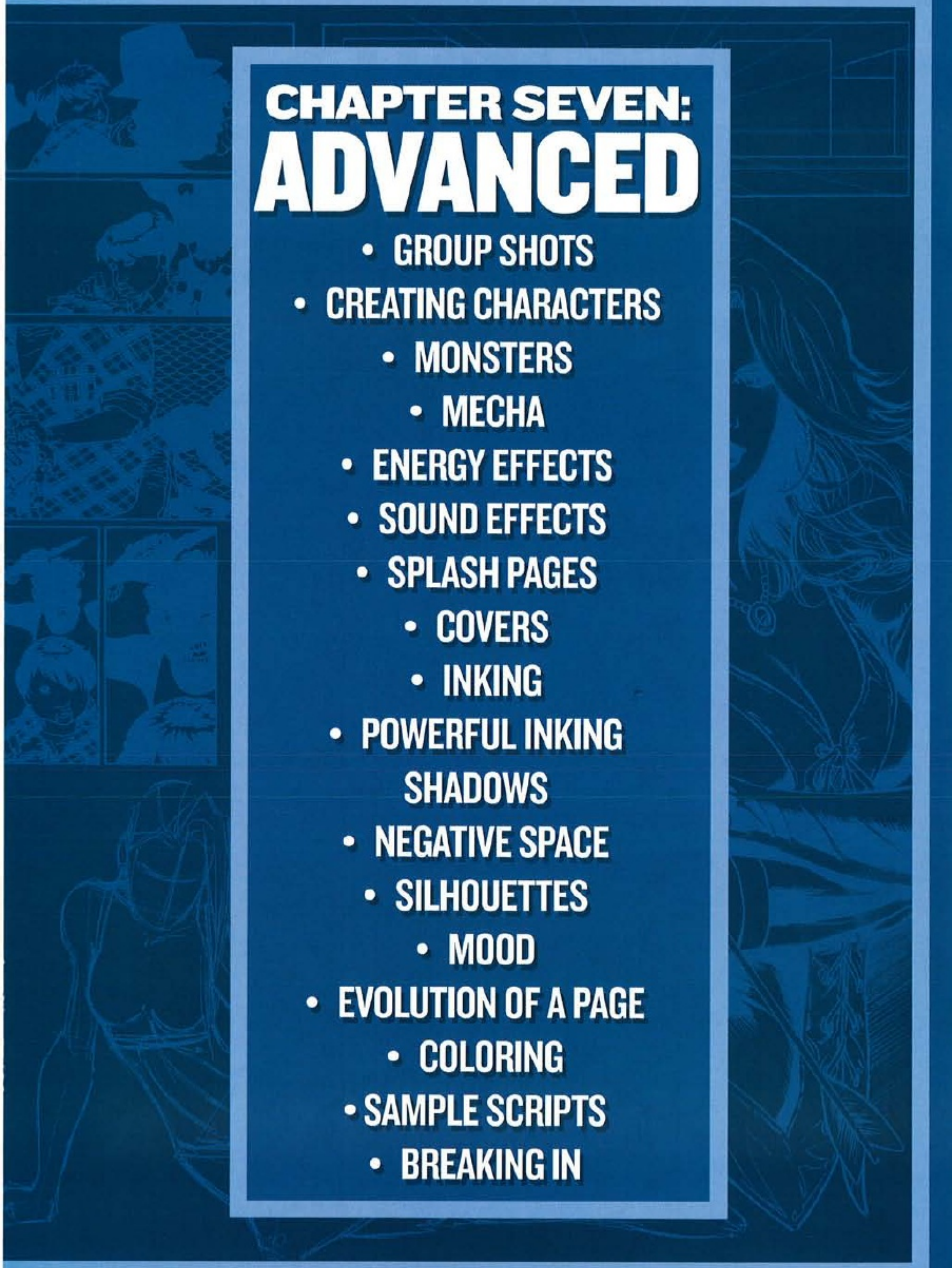
In this next example, I open with a series of tight, isolated images, followed by the establishing shot. The extreme close-up panels aren't designed to give the reader any concrete visual facts about the scene; their sole intent is to give emotional information. I'm setting the mood before the situation...or at least some of it. I'm teasing the reader a bit, inviting him in with a little mystery while supplying definite signs—the bloody hand, the teary eye, etc. (I chose to go with several inset panels here, but a single isolated image works just as well sometimes.) Then, as I hit the reader with the full scene, the overall impact is stronger.

This technique works with a variety of scenarios. For a party, the close-up panels might be of happy faces, balloons, confetti, champagne glasses, whatever, to set up a mood of celebration. In a somber moment for a character, I might isolate personal items in the room before the establishing shot.

## SURPRISESHOT

In this example, I've taken a very different approach to the pacing by having the establishing shot come at the end, giving no hint of the surrounding villains in any of the panels leading up to it. This pacing sets up a revelation of mood. The first panel says, "This doesn't look good." The next three say, "This is bad." The last panel says, "Oh, boy! This is really bad."

You probably noticed that in all three examples, I basically used the same shots. This shows how by simply moving them around I can create three distinct variations of mood. That's the effect of pacing. Think about what you're conveying with your art beyond strictly the visual information: Pin-up shots are great, but a scene should have a mood.



# CHAPTER SEVEN: ADVANCED

- GROUP SHOTS
- CREATING CHARACTERS
- MONSTERS
- MECHA
- ENERGY EFFECTS
- SOUND EFFECTS
- SPLASH PAGES
- COVERS
- INKING
- POWERFUL INKING
- SHADOWS
- NEGATIVE SPACE
- SILHOUETTES
- MOOD
- EVOLUTION OF A PAGE
- COLORING
- SAMPLE SCRIPTS
- BREAKING IN

# GROUP SHOTS

BY GEORGE PÉREZ

Hi class! When *Wizard* asked me to host one of these "Basic Training" articles, I was told they had me specifically in mind for this lesson. After 30 years in this business, I knew what that meant. For better or worse, my main claim to fame is drawing group books. Seldom happy with just getting a half-dozen characters on a page, I'm the type who likes to get as many as he can elbowing for attention. Some say I'm crazy, others say I'm insane. And they're all correct. Now it's time for me to pass that insanity on to you.

## A CAST OF THOUSANDS

Actually, it's only 25. Before I start laying out a group shot, I make a list of the characters I'm going to use, so I can then check them off as I draw them. The characters are usually determined by the script, so picking and choosing is generally not an option. However, since I'm well known for my work on *Avengers* (unabashed self-promotion here!), the guys at *Wizard* figured Earth's Mightiest Heroes would do nicely. Thus, the cast is set.

1. Beast
2. Black Knight (on winged horse)
3. Black Panther
4. Black Widow
5. Captain America
6. Crystal
7. Falcon (with Redwing)
8. Giant-Man
9. Hawkeye
10. Hercules
11. Hulk
12. Iron Man
13. Machine Man
14. Magdalene
15. Photon
16. Quicksilver
17. Rage
18. Sandman
19. Sersi
20. Scarlet Witch
21. She-Hulk
22. Stingray
23. Thor
24. Vision
25. Wasp

## GROUP DYNAMICS

First off, just as there's no one way to draw a character, there are many ways of drawing a large group (not counting covers, which is a whole other ball game). Most of the time, that decision is dictated by the script. In my career I've found that group shots fall into three major categories:

### THE GATHERING

In **Figure A**, the characters are usually in some large room, either talking to each other or reacting to their surroundings. (For the sake of this article, I'm skipping backgrounds altogether.) A major difference with this type of layout compared to the others is you have the option of turning characters away from the reader. In the case of characters with capes, that's a way to avoid drawing all the detail on a character or two. Just be aware of the comparative sizes of the characters.

### THE PORTRAIT

Usually requested for a splash page, this style shows the characters standing in appropriate postures as they look directly at the reader (**Figure B**). Sometimes this portrait consists merely of head shots. The layout I've drawn here is somewhere in between.

FIGURE A

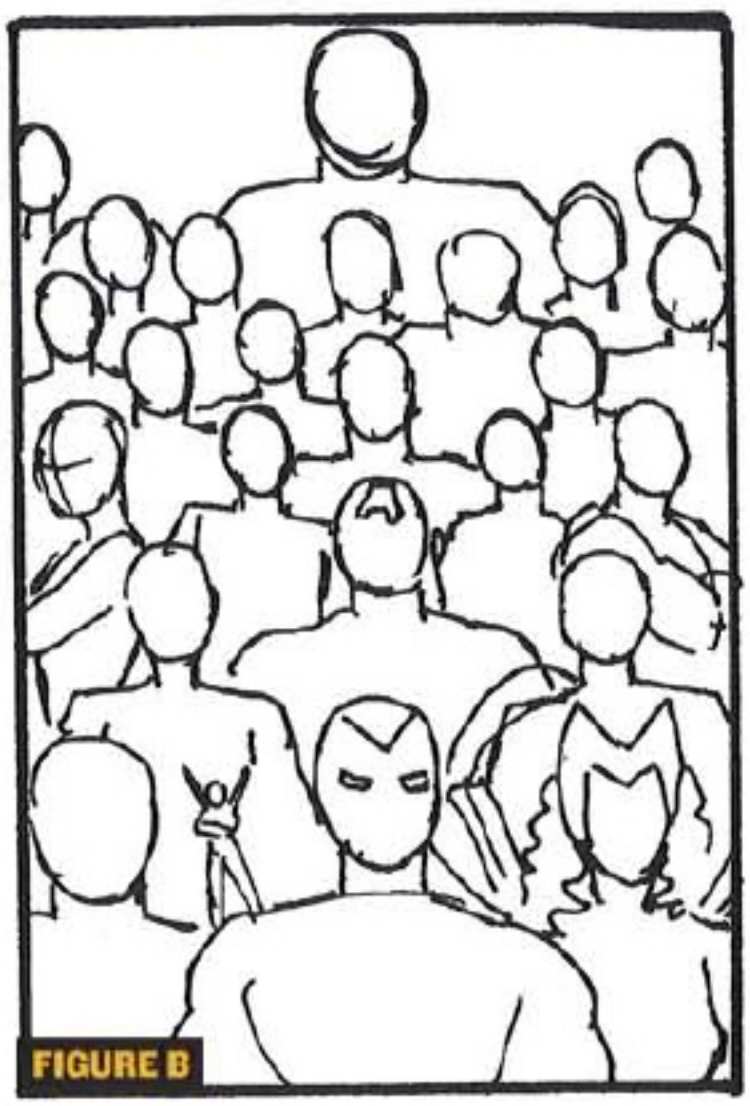


FIGURE B

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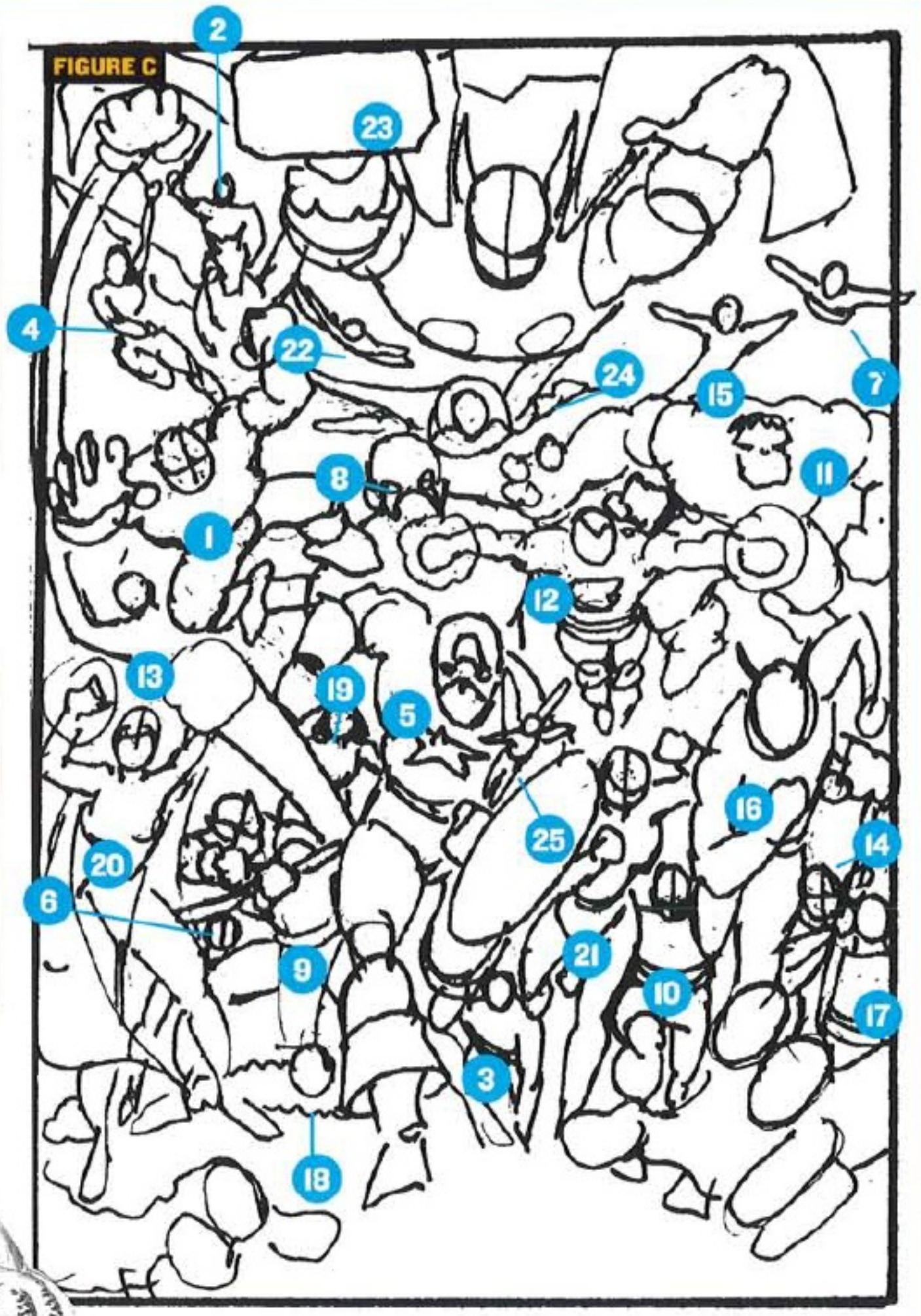
## THE ACTION SHOT

**Figure C** has got superheroes doing what they do best! They could be charging at the reader, ready for battle, while some use their powers to indicate that an enemy's just out of page range. They could be running at the reader in the same direction, or be in the midst of battle with enemies all around. For the sake of this lesson (and since drawing two groups battling is a bit much for now), we'll concentrate on the "Battle Charge" because it utilizes many elements common to all the group shots.




## DIRECT EFFECT

Since we read from left to right, there's a sort of bias that establishes the right as the direction of advancement. Having the characters running toward the left seems to imply retreat—unless you've already established that's where the menace is located. While the characters are running straight at the reader, I can still direct them slightly to the right through small turns in their bodies and heads.

## METHODTO THEMADNESS

Unfortunately, there's no way to give equal time to everyone in a group shot—somebody's got to man the rear. This creates a sense of depth and perspective, which is very useful if you decide not to use backgrounds. Choosing which characters will be in front is an artistic decision, which is dictated by who the characters are, what they do and how they do it. In choosing who will be emphasized, several considerations need to be made.

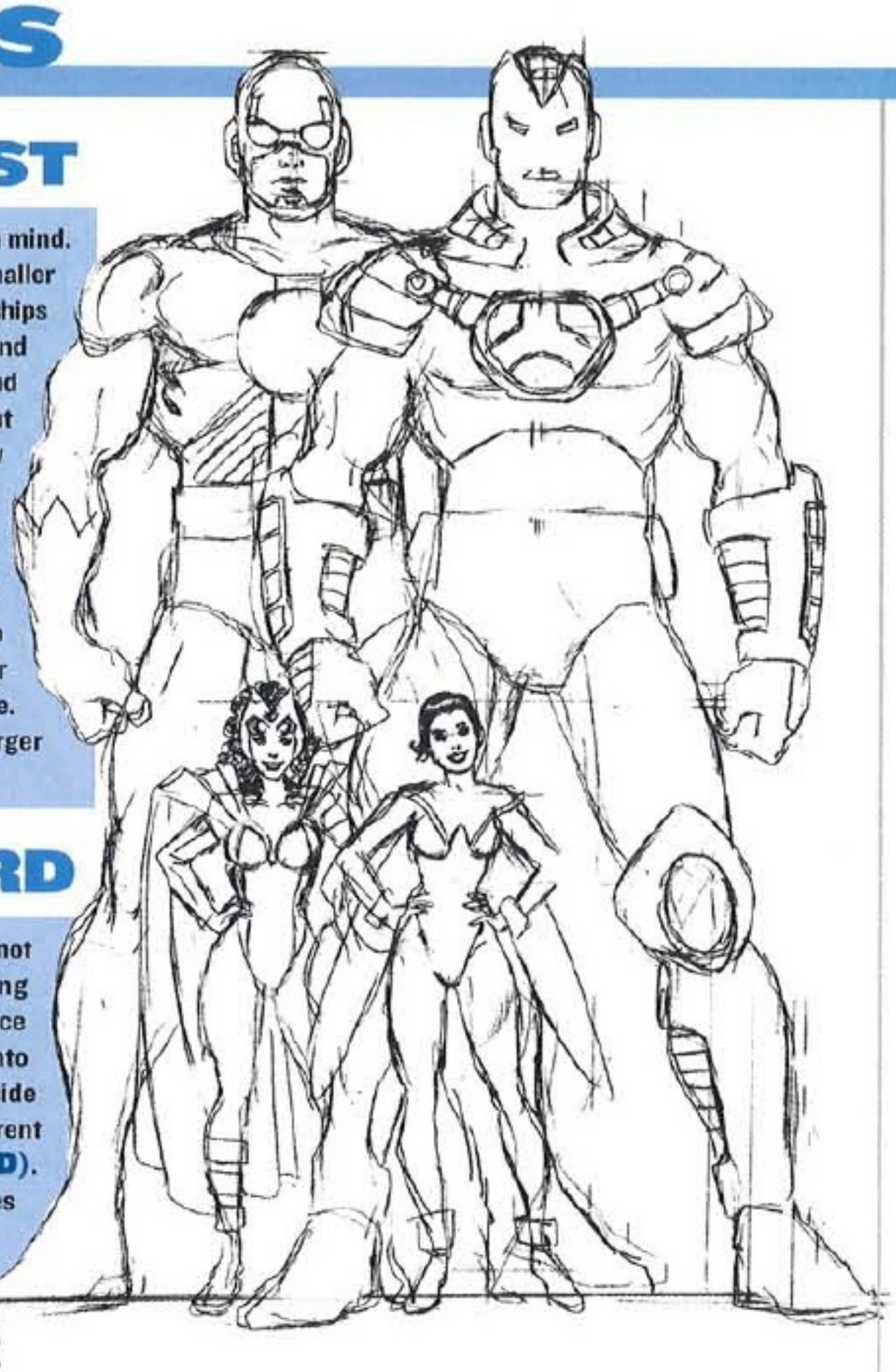
## STARPOWER

Character positioning is often based on the popularity of certain characters, or their prominence within the group. For example, few will argue Captain America's right to lead an Avengers charge. However, that doesn't necessarily mean Cap will be the absolute front-most Avenger.

# GROUPSHOTS

## SIZEABOVETHEREST

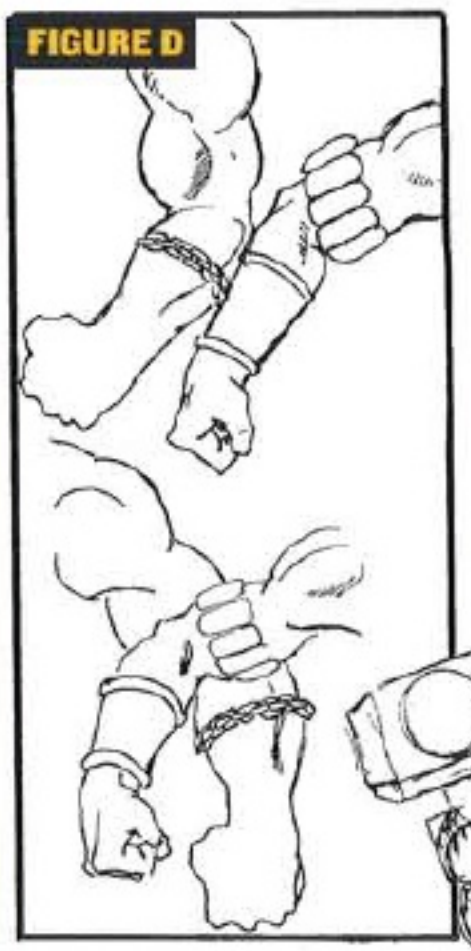
As I said earlier, size relationships should always be kept in mind. Usually, larger characters are pushed farther back, while smaller ones are in the foreground. However, make sure that relationships remain clear. Let's take the two size extremes: Giant-Man and the Wasp. Notice how Giant-Man, Iron Man, Scarlet Witch and the Wasp would look standing on the same horizon line, but without any perspective lines or backgrounds to indicate how far they are from each other. Without that scale, Giant-Man and Iron Man seem to be the same height, while the Wasp appears as tall as the Scarlet Witch. Then add perspective lines, and the illusion's exposed. If we drew Giant-Man taller in the first place, though, there'd be no such illusion. So, to maintain Giant-Man's sense of height, always draw him bigger than any other character, regardless of where he is in the picture. Conversely, overlapping the tiny Wasp in front of any larger foreground character fully establishes how tiny she is.



## OVERLORD

Speaking of overlapping, try not to have characters butting elbows with each other, since that might fool the reader into thinking they're standing side by side, rather than on different planes of depth (**Figure D**). Overlapping definitely solves the problem of who's in front of whom.

FIGURE D



## FREQUENT FLYERS

Since we've got a vertical space to fill, we should decide which guys and gals are on the top and who's on the bottom. (Get yer minds outta the gutter, class.) The top is easy: To be in the sky, ya gotta fly—although leaping characters like the Hulk and the Beast also fit in this category. Flying characters are useful, since they can be drawn in deep perspective, so all you really need to draw is the character's upper body. This can save quite a bit of space.

# GROUND CONTROL

The lower half of the page is usually where the non-flying members are relegated.

Primarily, they're runners, but all runners aren't created equal—no two characters should run exactly the same way (**Figure E**). Speedsters like Quicksilver would seldom be at the rear of a charge, although we have to slow him down so he doesn't run out of the frame.

And not everyone needs to run. Some characters work better posing, like Hawkeye and Crystal pictured at right. It adds variety to the shot and draws the reader to their area of the page.

**FIGURE E**

# HERE, THEREAND EVERYWHERE

Then there are those characters who can have it both ways. Characters with expansive abilities, like Machine Man, could actually be in many places at once just by stretching out their bodies and limbs over various points of the illustration. (Check out the finished piece on page 168 to see what I mean.) Gimmicks like this bring a sense of design and unity to a group shot.

# BLACK+BLACK=BLACK

Be careful to keep characters clear. Drawing two black-suited characters overlapping each other makes it hard to tell where one ends and the other begins. If you're not sure who will be inking the piece, you may be asking for trouble. Either avoid the problem, or make it easier by throwing some highlights on the outlines of the conflicting characters (as I've done in the example to the far left). And since we're drawing in black and white, pencilers often fail to consider color's effect on a group shot. Thanks to modern coloring techniques, placing characters with the same colored costumes together is much less of a worry. (Although, for the sake of balance, try to avoid having all your red guys in one place and all your blues in another.)

# GROUPSHOTS

# AVENGERS ASSEMBLED

On the finished piece at left, you can see many of the principles I outlined earlier. However, with so many characters doing so many things, even an old pro like myself still makes mistakes. The important thing is to keep the piece interesting and dynamic. For that to work, composing a group shot should be an organic process, with the picture changing as you go along to take care of problems you didn't consider in your original thumbnail sketch. Some examples:

**a)** I moved Cap's shield closer into his body and made him run straight toward the reader (a change from the original image). This allowed more of She-Hulk to be seen.

**b)** I changed Sandman's left hand to a fist because the open hand looked too much like the Hulk's. I also "pulverized" Sandman's other hand (bottom left) so as not to distract from the Scarlet Witch.

**c)** I changed Hawkeye's bow to a vertical position so I wouldn't block off Crystal.

**d)** I added a stinger blast effect for the Wasp to throw something at the reader. A blast from a larger character would obscure too much of the drawing.

**e)** I removed the energy effects on Iron Man's fists so that Giant-Man's face is clear.

**f)** I changed the Falcon's posture so it wouldn't look the same as that of the Vision and Stingray.

**g)** I added Redwing (the Falcon's falcon) because I didn't know where I'd put him until the drawing was finished.

**h)** I changed Black Widow so that she could be holding on to Machine Man's arm.

**i)** Because of the immense amount of space the Black Knight and his winged horse would take, he had to be put far into the rear. Now he looks about the same size as the Wasp, but all the overlapping of characters keeps the size ratio clear.

**j)** In the "peekaboo" spots, areas where I'm basically just trying to fit parts of characters in when there's no room for full figures, I try to use characters who can be identified even without their full costumes being revealed. In the case of Sersi, I used her glowing eyes to easily identify her.

**WELL,** there you have it. Those are just a few notes on how I do group shots—your mileage may vary. There is one thing I didn't mention yet, however. As I said, *Wizard* only asked me to put together a primer on drawing a group shot, not a group *cover.* Imagine having to do this—and leaving room for the logo and UPC box? The padded room awaits!

*George Pérez's amazing ability to spotlight all our favorite characters on a page at once can be seen in blockbuster titles such as Marvel's* Avengers *and DC's* The New Teen Titans.

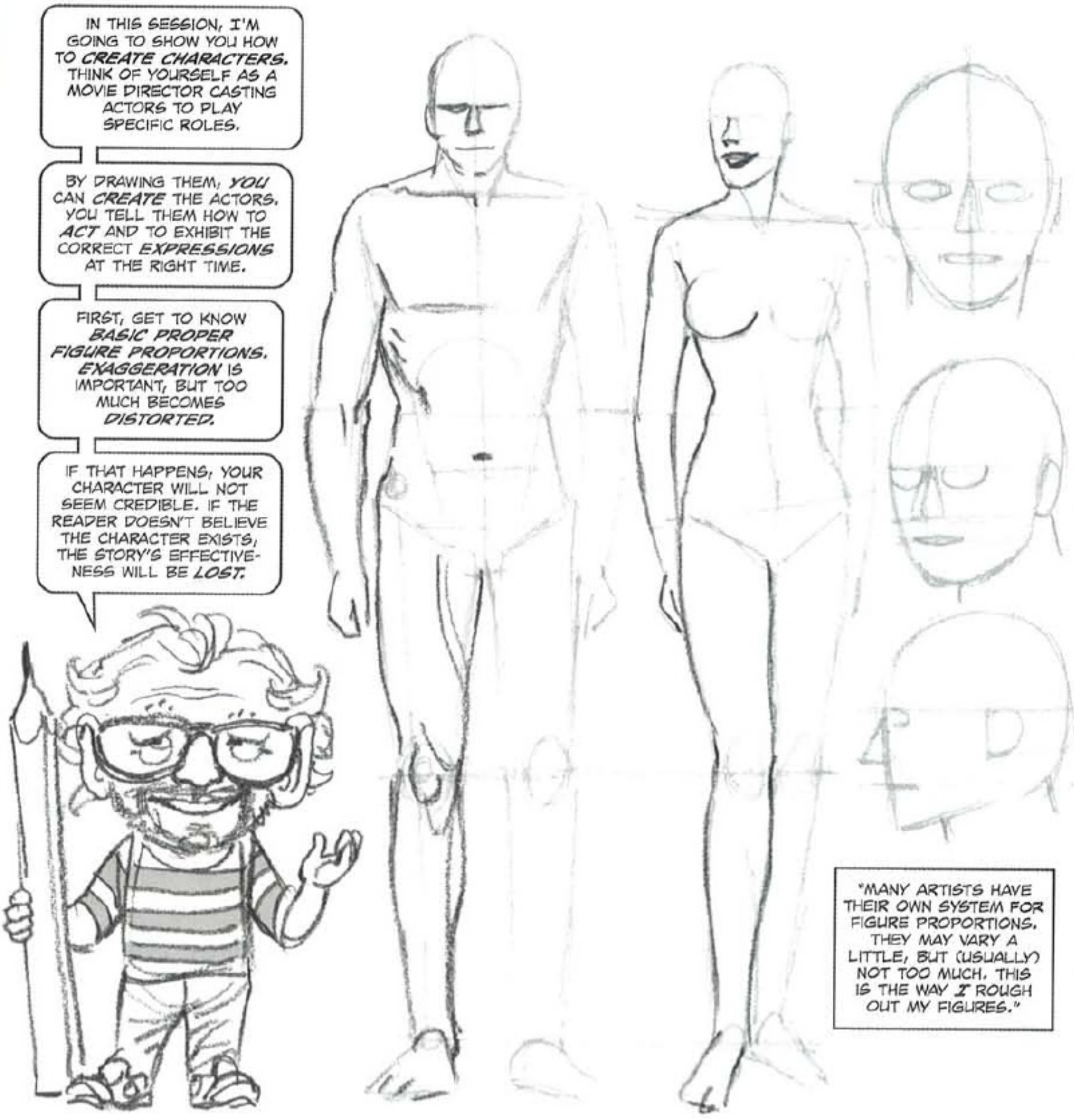
## CHAPTER SEVEN: PART 2

# CREATING CHARACTERS BY JOE KUBERT

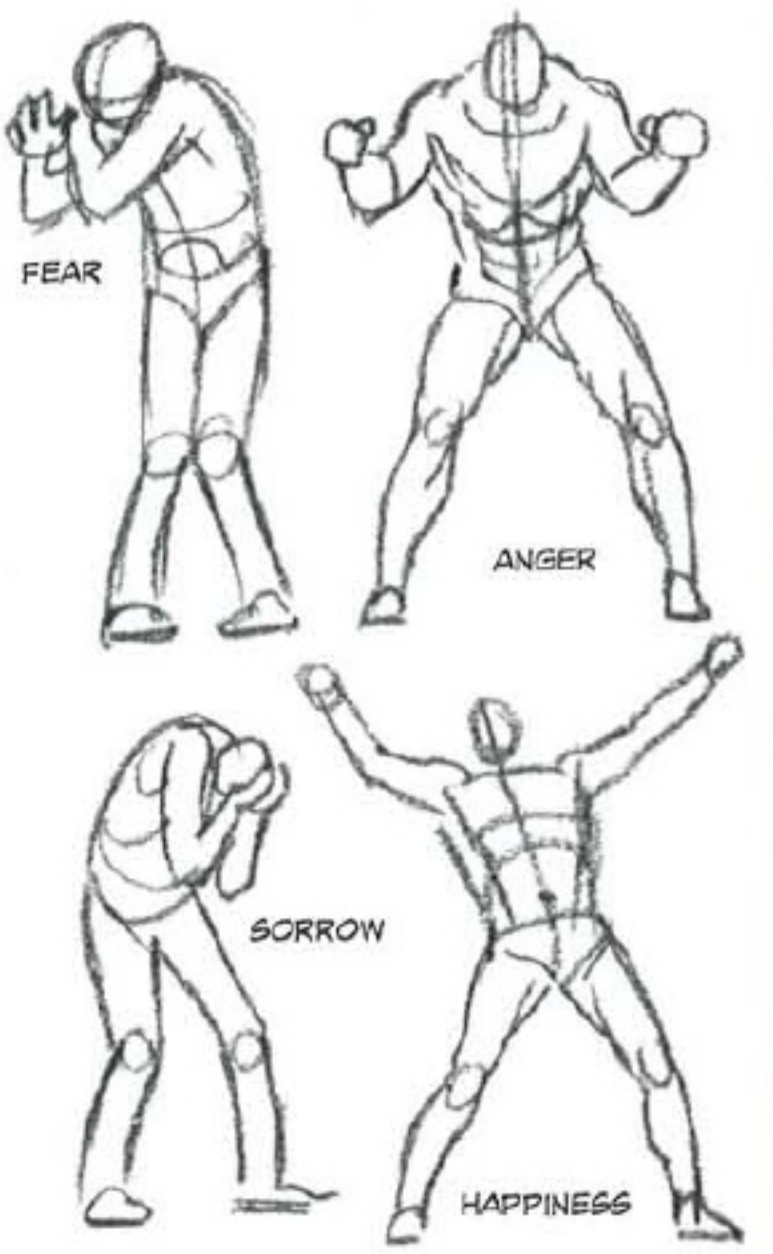
I hope you've been practicing since our last session. Don't forget—your rate of improvement is in direct ratio to the amount of time you spend drawing. The more you draw, the more you will improve. It's like physical exercise. If you do a little every day the effectiveness is much more positive than if you do it only one day every two weeks. And after two weeks, it's like starting all over again.

*Don't* be afraid to make mistakes. Making mistakes, recognizing those mistakes and correcting them is the *best* way to learn and improve your drawing.

The suggestions that I make in these articles are based on the artwork of thousands of aspiring cartoonists that I've critiqued. Many have gone on to become successful professional cartoonists, graduates from the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art, Inc. and my series of correspondence courses.



Notice how an *old* man rises from a chair. Quite different from the way a *young* man stands up—or walks. An old man may be unsteady on his feet, while a younger man may walk with little effort. These movements reflect each individual's physical and emotional characteristics.

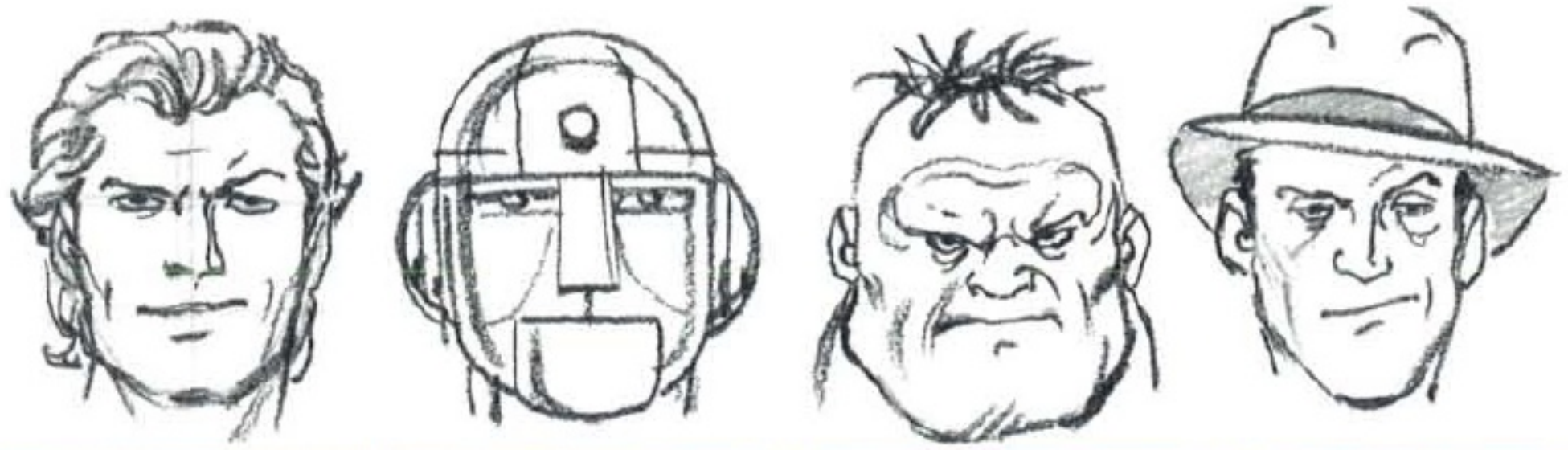



# SKETCHBOOK

Keep a sketchbook with you at all times. If you're in a park, make quick sketches of children at play. Watch the older kids playing ball. Analyze their movements. How do their actions differ from teenagers or adults? Make more sketches. They don't have to be complete. Just sketch a few lines to show the flow of action and balance. Their body movements will tell you a lot about them, and you can incorporate your sketches into the characters that you create.

# CREATING CHARACTERS

The character you design should *physically* reflect the *characteristics* with which you have endowed him. The character's *attitude* should also be clearly delineated. Ask yourself: what do I know about this character? How should he look? Analyze your character. Give him a history—a life. Your drawing should be a graphic description containing as much information as a written biography.

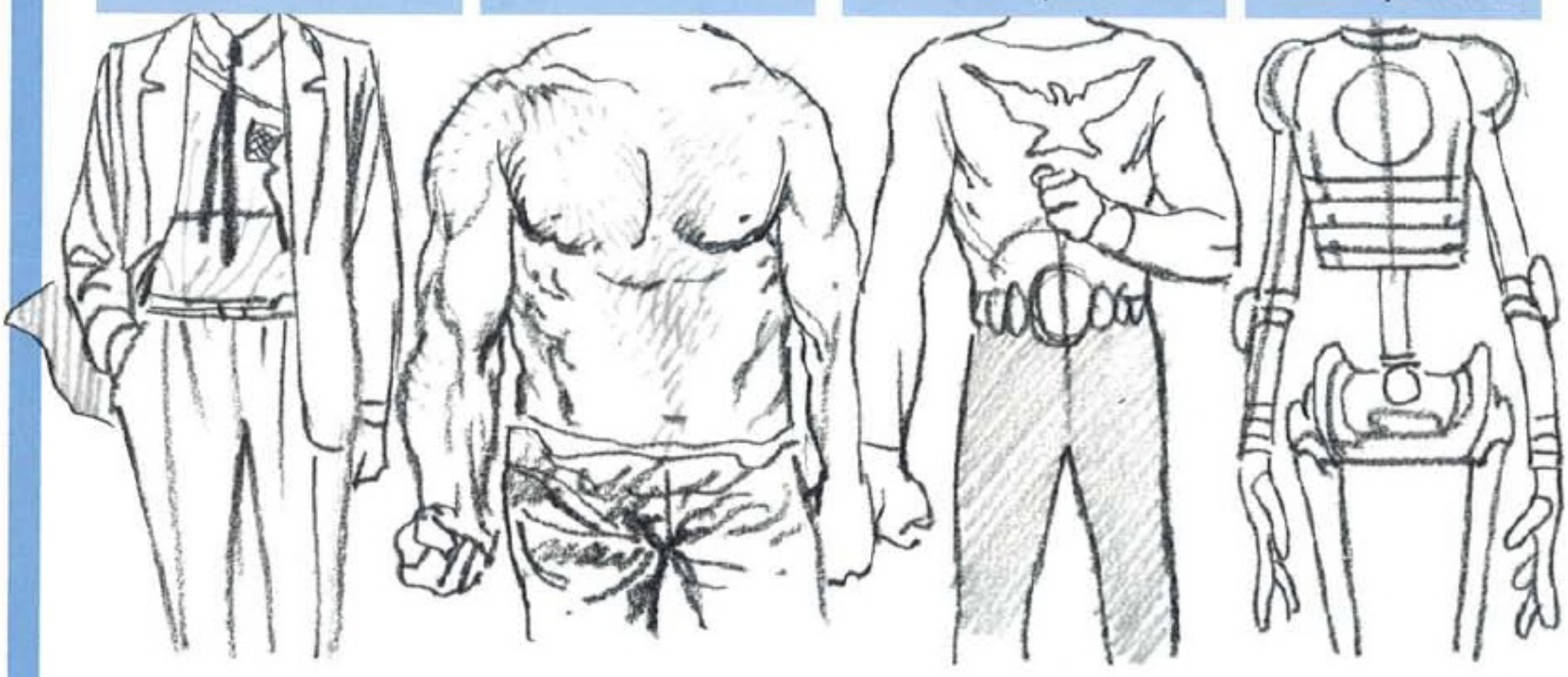


**1.** The *hero* is clean cut, clear-eyed and square-jawed, with a thick head of hair.

**2.** The *robotic* hero is essentially expressionless.

**3.** The oversized *bruiser* hero has a thick neck, heavily furrowed brow and unkempt hair.

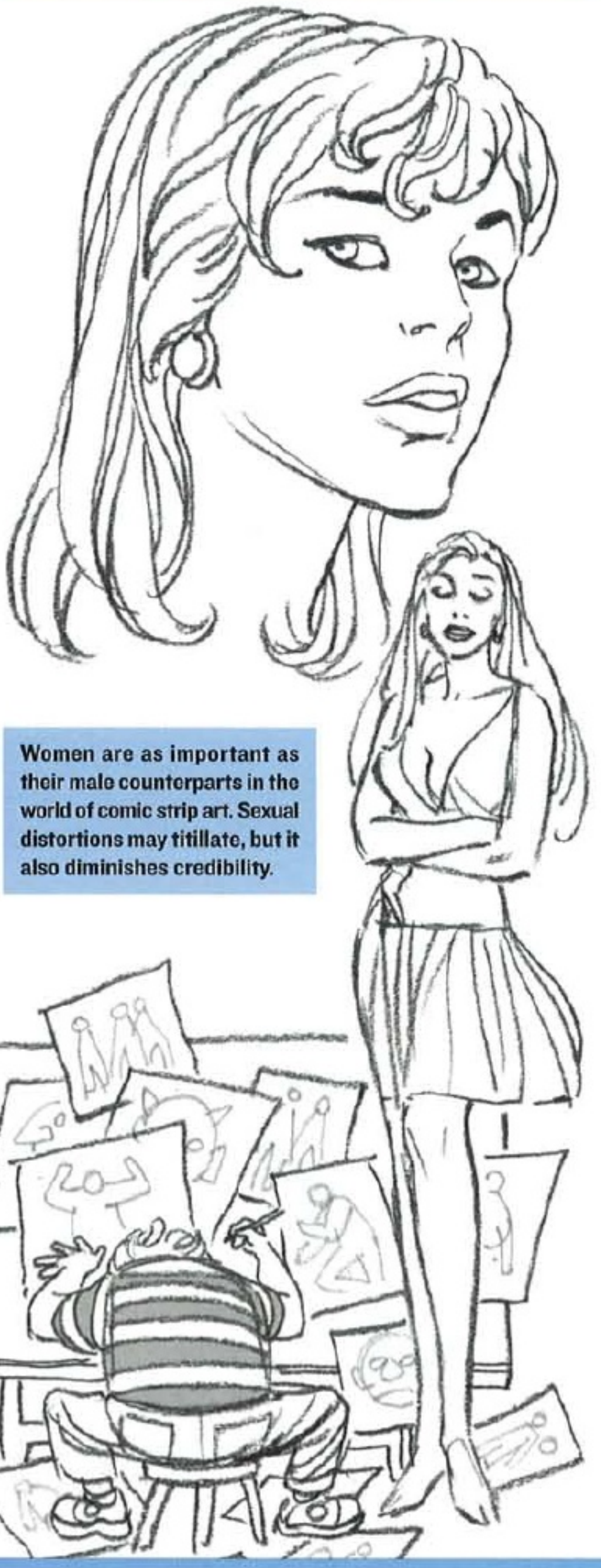
**4.** The *detective* may look a bit dissipated due to his profession.



# WHOSE BODY BELONGS TO WHO?

# WOMEN

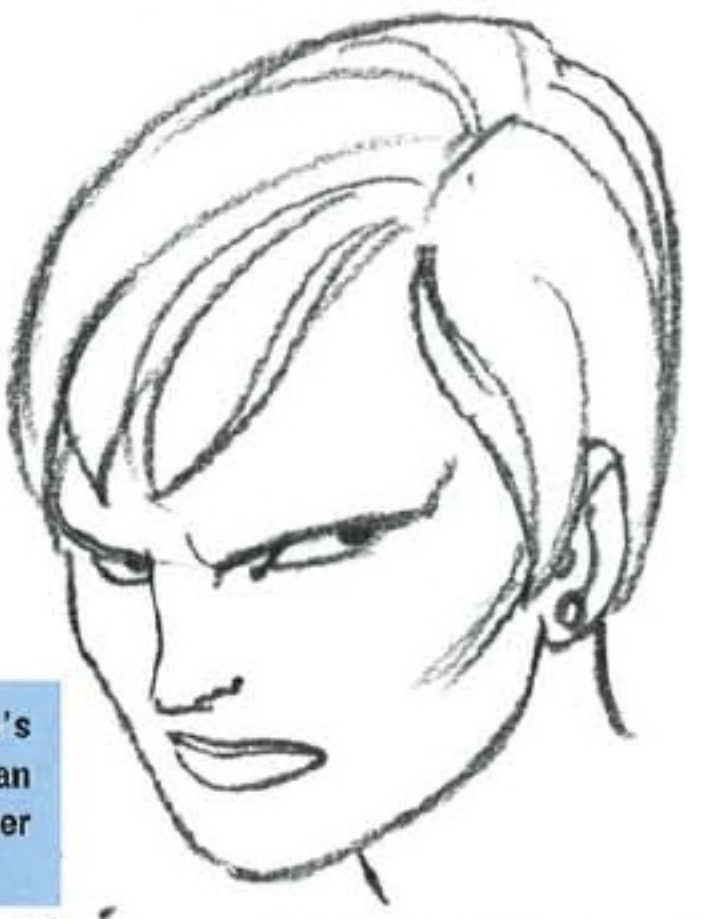
Many male students have told me that they find it more difficult to draw women. Conversely, female students generally find it more difficult to draw men. The reason is obvious. Women tend to draw women and men tend to draw men. This, however, does not lessen the need for the cartoonist to be able to draw *anything* and *everything*.



Women are as important as their male counterparts in the world of comic strip art. Sexual distortions may titillate, but it also diminishes credibility.

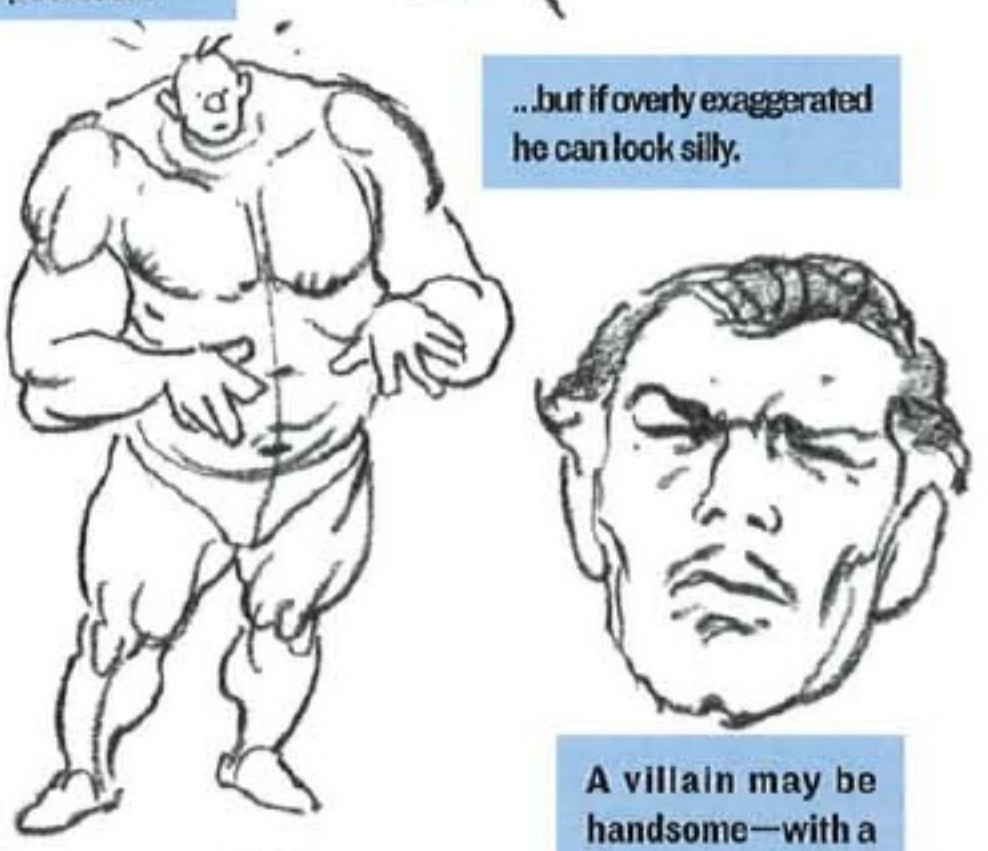
# VILLAINS

A female may play the role of villain as effectively as a male. She may be as powerful physically, but she should still maintain a high degree of femininity.



A villain's anatomy can reflect super powers...

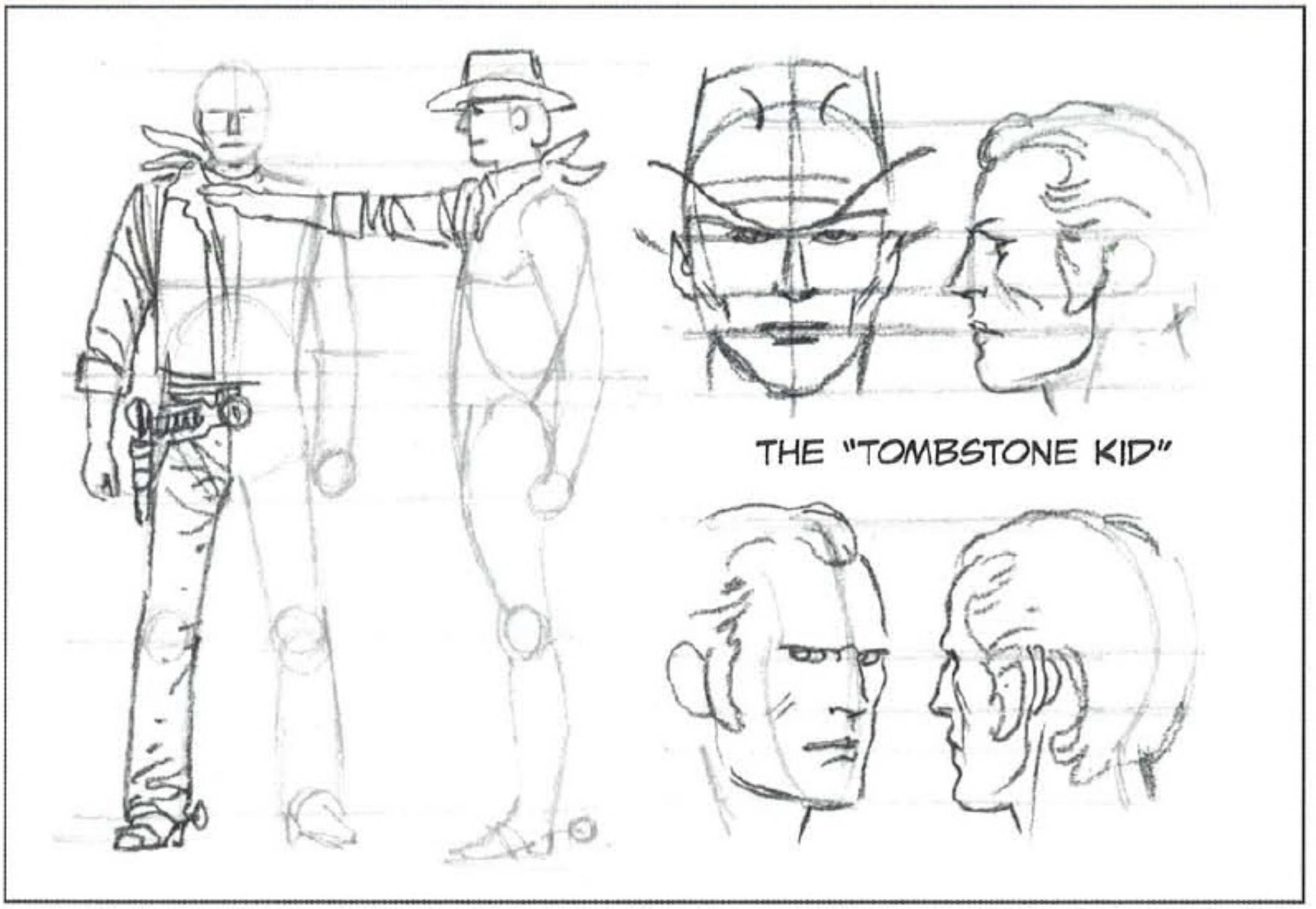
...but if overly exaggerated he can look silly.



A villain may be handsome—with a dangerous look.

# CREATINGCHARACTERS

No matter how well you think you know your character, there is always a tendency to add or subtract or change little nuances. A nose; a bit too long or too short. Eyes; too large or too small. A mouth; too wide or too narrow. A figure; too short or too tall, too thin or too fat.




Facial expressions must reflect your character's emotional intent. Does he smile or sneer? Is he angry or light-hearted? The facade tells you (and the reader) of the character's inner workings.

# MONSTERS

BY DOUG MAHNKE

When I first began to draw at the ripe old age of 2, monsters were on my A-list. Day and night I penciled out mindless beasts in crude fashion. At roughly age 5 my grandmother asked me to draw something nice. The best I could do was a face filled with ladybugs. Many of my teachers were consumed, stomped or gutted by monsters on the backs of homework assignments.

Basically, monsters were a big part of my childhood, so I feel kinda qualified to teach a thing or two about drawing them. Sometimes the mind just needs a little spark to get going. So let the horror-fest begin...

## BODYSHOP

Monsters come in an endless variety of shapes and sizes, limited only by your sick, twisted imagination. To simplify things, let's concentrate on humanoid monsters—those which resemble us somewhat as opposed to some quivering, globulous mass slithering up from the bounds of Hell. (Although that's a lot of fun to draw, too!)

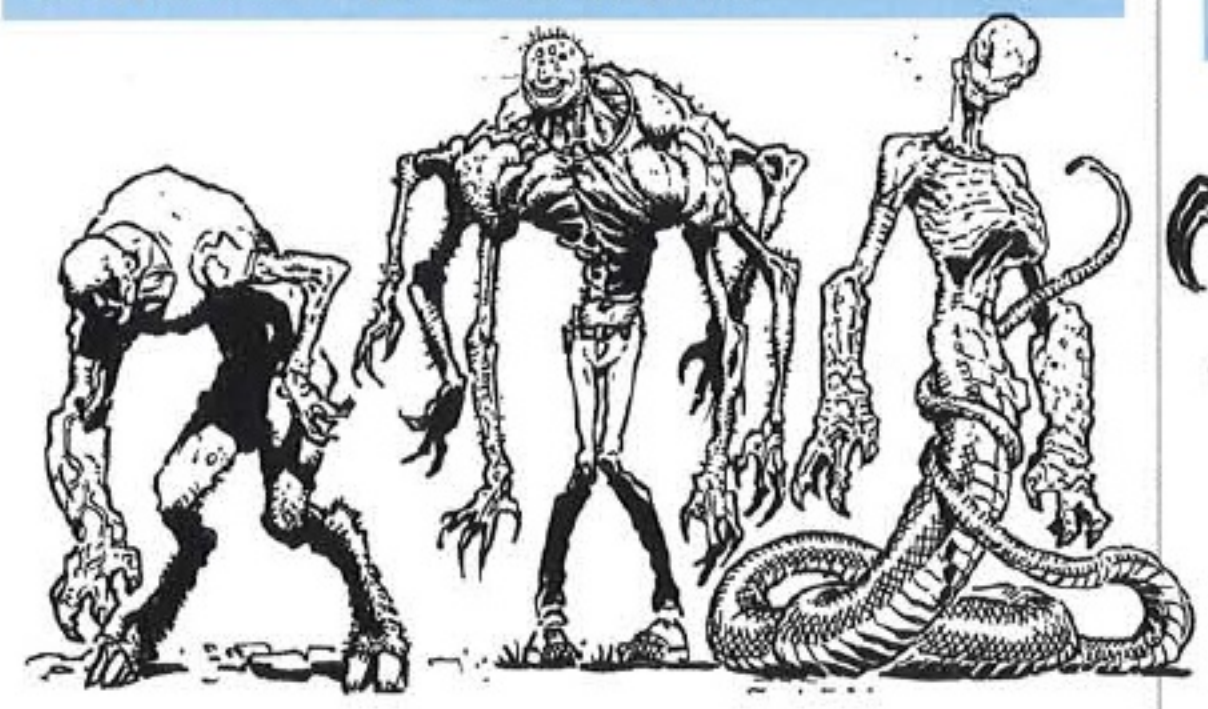
To start, let's imagine a few templates—monsters most of us are familiar with. From left to right, they include the ill-formed hunchback, the rotting zombie, the mindless brute and the winged devil. Toss in a snake and a spider for good measure.

A closer look at our hunchback reveals a simple yet effective approach to any monster: a lack of symmetry or alignment of body parts. The arms and legs are mismatched and the head's at an odd angle. Imagine that any movement causes pain. As for the others, the zombie's more bones than muscle, the brute is muscle on muscle (note how his knees buckle inward and his torso rolls in upon itself), and the devil's just real sneaky-looking as he tiptoes on his goat legs.

## MONSTERCOMBOS

Here's the fun part. I've made some simple amalgams based on our previous group and come up with three new monsters. When creating freakish creatures, it can be as simple as stitching ill-matched parts together. Look closely to see exactly what I used. Notice how the snake and spider (at a much larger size) were incorporated.

Now, some combinations may not work as well as others. Putting large devil wings on our little hunchback, or just two little spindly arms on our brute, wouldn't exactly create a more frightening image. On the other hand, having the snake coiled about the zombie while the spider crawled out of his mouth would most certainly work. Just keep practicing and you'll soon learn what works and what doesn't. Basically, show your mom: If she screams, it works.

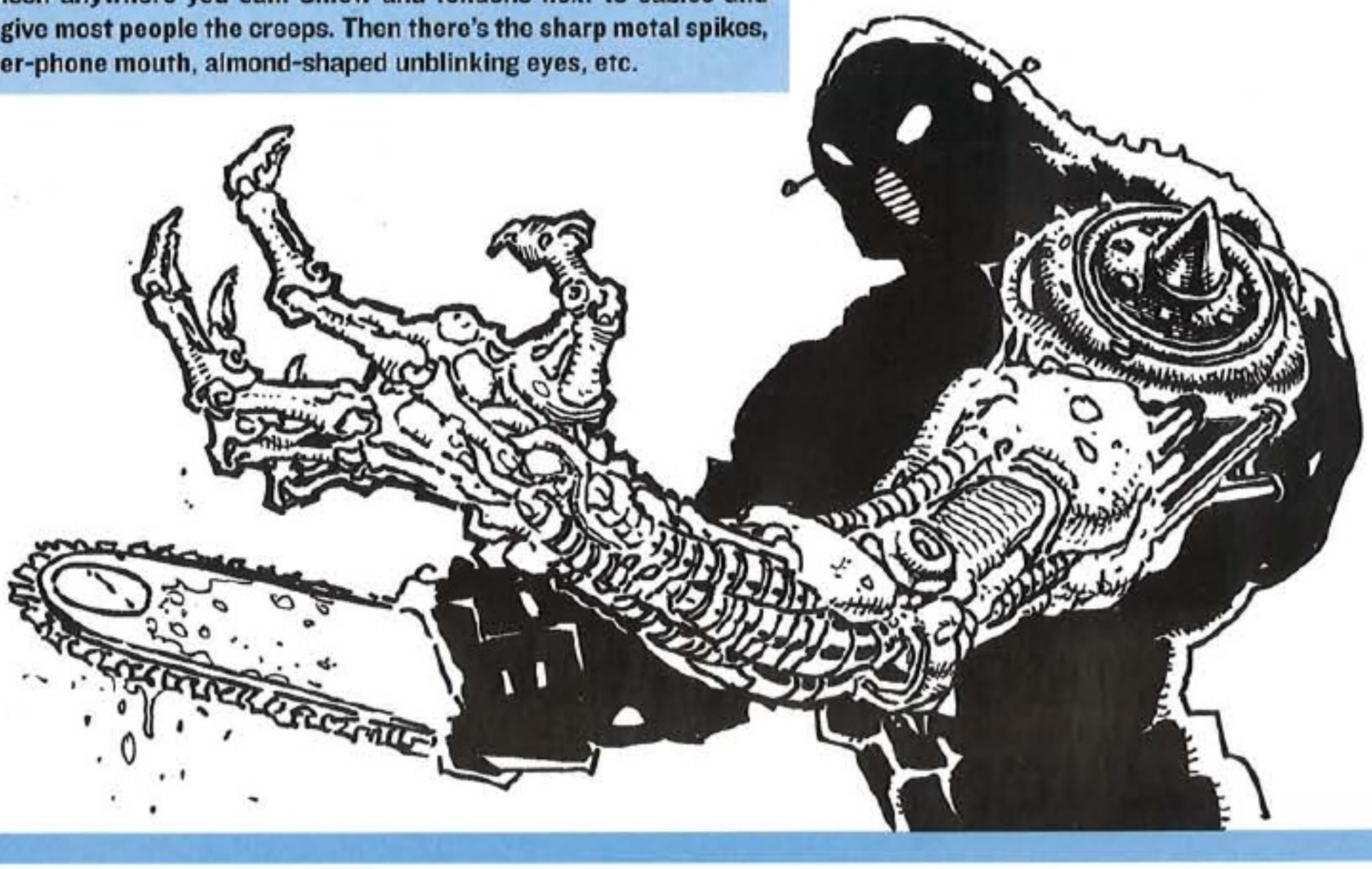


## GETTINGHANDY

When looking for inspiration, the animal world offers excellent opportunities. These hands are based on what should be obvious: the talon of a raptor, the hand of an ape and the claw of a crab. And they're all suitable for monster use. Talons are actually my favorite for monster use since they're seriously adapted to grasping soft flesh tightly (ugh) and tearing humans to pieces. The hands of lizards are also great, as are octopus tentacles, with their suckers and merciless grasp. When adding animal parts to human form, however, you have to decide: How much will make a monster of the man, or a bit of a man out of a monster? In other words, do you want your creature looking more like a human or an animal?

## MACHINEMAN

Machines can provide excellent inspiration for monster design. A mingling of flesh with everyday household tools and gadgetry can be frightening. Traditional horror movie props such as the chainsaw give our creature that non-symmetrical edge. I could have just as well used an outboard motor, circular saw, drill ax or any other instrument that can cut or smash us humans to pieces. Just remember to mix the metal with flesh anywhere you can. Sinew and tendons next to cables and wires give most people the creeps. Then there's the sharp metal spikes, speaker-phone mouth, almond-shaped unblinking eyes, etc.



# PUTYOUR HEADSTOGETHER

Here's a closer look at head design. We have two very different creatures—the zombie **(Figure A)**, with his shriveled, dehydrated look, and the thickly featured brute **(Figure B)**. By combining elements of both we achieve a "zombrutie" **(Figure C)**. This is only one of many possible combinations, but you get the idea.

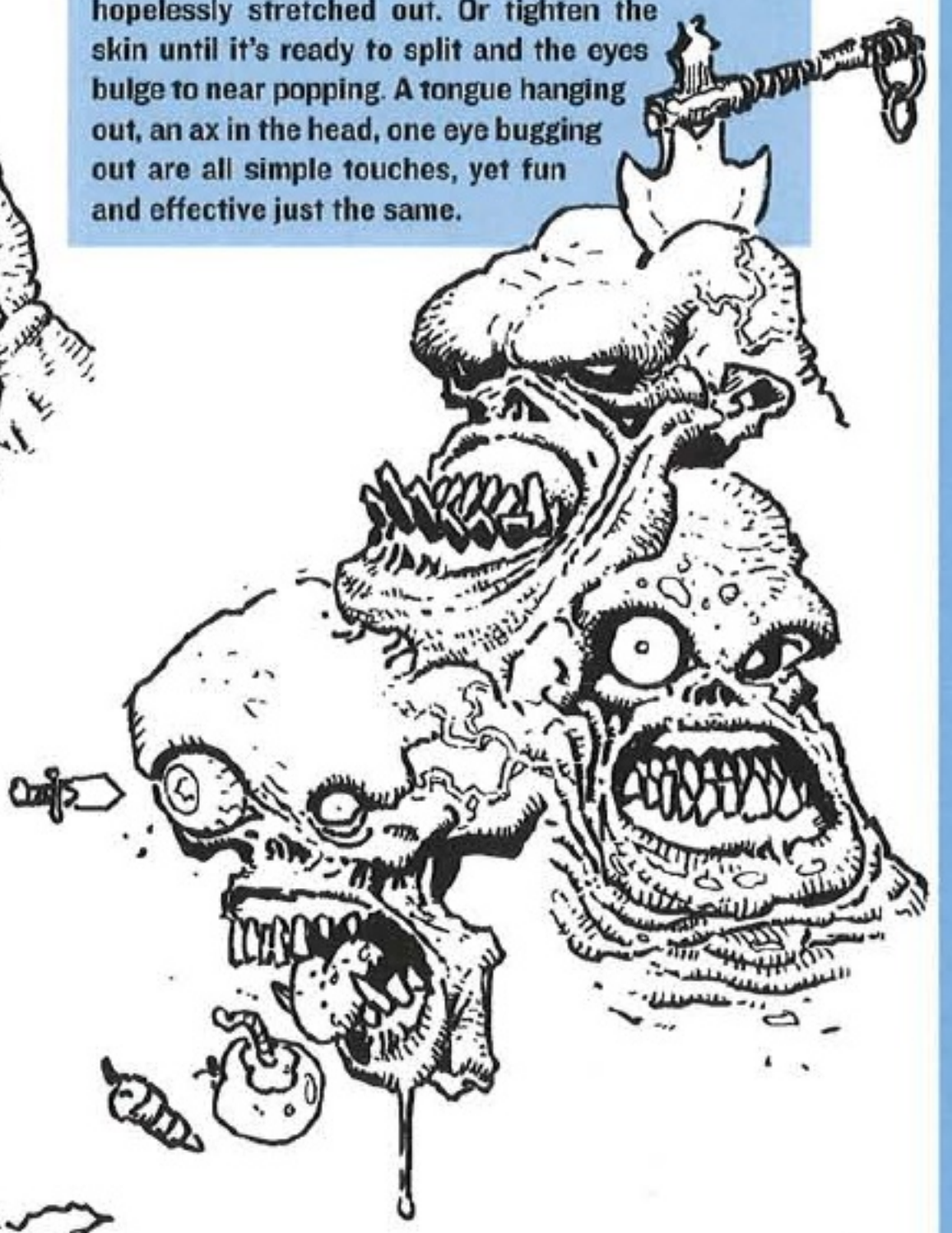
FIGURE A

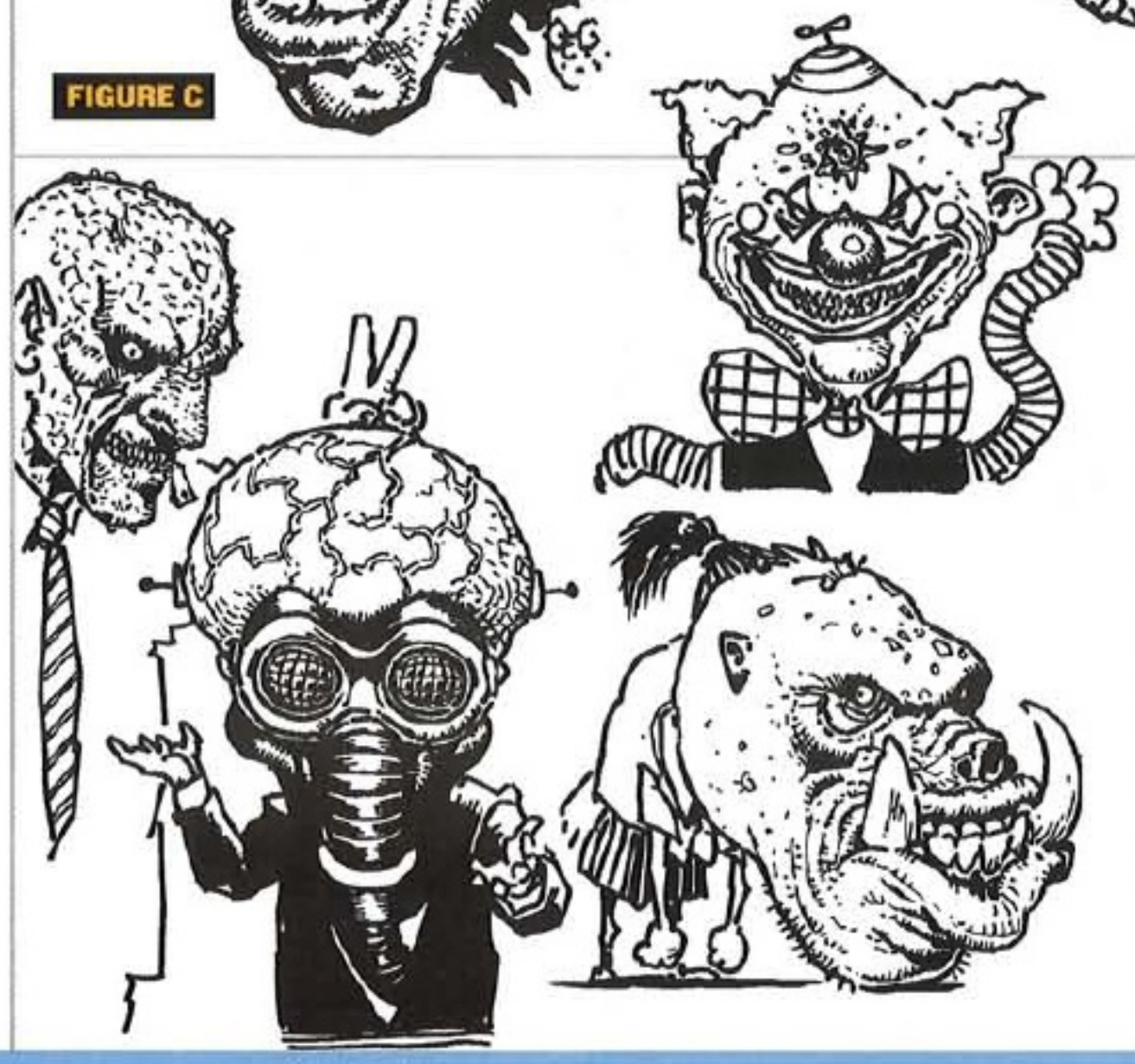
FIGURE B

FIGURE C

Now that we've established a look, let's take it a step further and put a funhouse-mirror spin on it. This is always a good approach for any monster when you're looking for something new.

Squash, stretch and twist to your heart's content. If the brow is thick and protruding, smash it way down over the eyes until the entire head is mashed in. Or pull a protruding jaw way out and don't spare the teeth—separate them, crowd them, blunt them, sharpen them, whatever. Pull the lips until they're hopelessly stretched out. Or tighten the skin until it's ready to split and the eyes bulge to near popping. A tongue hanging out, an ax in the head, one eye bugging out are all simple touches, yet fun and effective just the same.





# INSPIRATION MEANS PERSPIRATION

It doesn't take much sometimes—charred flesh and a zipper for a mouth, a bulbous head with a strange gas mask. Inspiration can come from just about anywhere. Sometimes you're lucky and odd things just pop into your head. The big, swollen head with the weird gas-mask face was actually based on an elephant. The tusky fellow came about because I asked my two daughters what was scary. One said a big dog, the other said a pig. I blended the two and added a bit of human. Children already think clowns are scary, so I added an impossibly large, evil grin and small, sharp, cannibal teeth. Children's nightmares just got a bit spookier.

## FACETHEHORROR

Okay, let's pull some of this together and fine tune it. Start with the head, modeled after our "zombrutie." One eye is large and bloodshot, staring out with evil intentions. I like to put extra baggage around eyes like these, giving 'em that weird, never-sleeps look. The other eye is small and dead, probably made lifeless from some horrible wound, now sewn up and scarred. The ears are rotting with bits missing, the jaw misaligned with a serious underbite. The lower lip hangs, almost flapping, with a bit of drool (not too much). Warts and a generally bad complexion cover the face. Yep, definitely someone you'd like to bring home to meet the folks.

## BODYBAG

The body is based on one of our first amalgams. I elongated the neck, with tendons and veins bulging from it. The smaller arm is webbed at the forearm, tight and springy looking, with a bony, nervous hand just waiting to grab someone. The big arm almost drags on the ground with a huge, clawed talon for crushing, clawing and destroying. The clothes are dirty and in tatters as if ripped by a hideous transformation. The torso is hopelessly bent over the legs.

This guy's just an ugly, ambulating mess, stumbling through a foggy, old cemetery. I tried to imagine a monster crushed and deformed by its own wickedness—chronically uncomfortable, hating the living. Being evil will do that to you.

# ALIENNATION

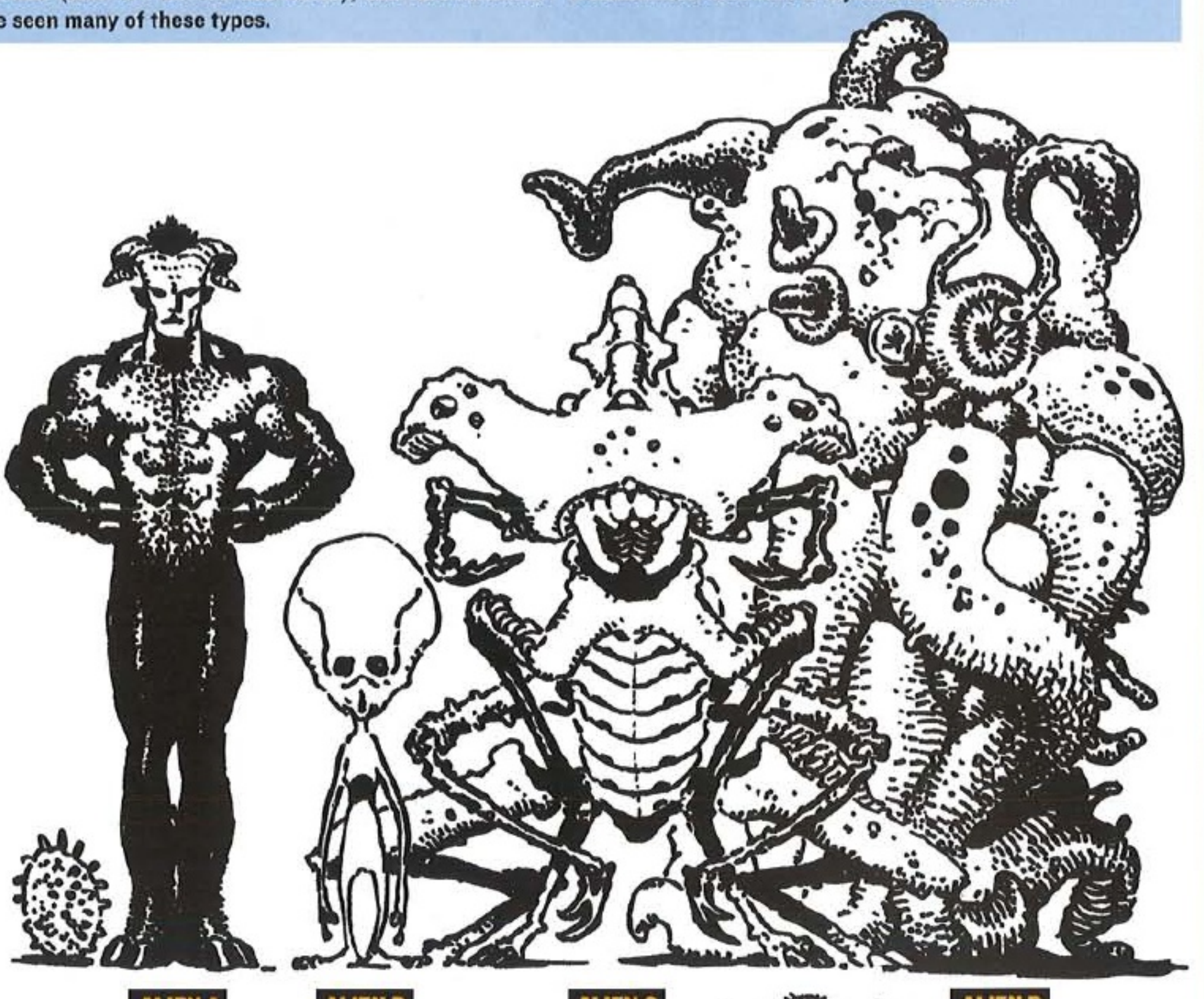
Nothing in this world is going to provide you with as much freedom to be creative as drawing aliens, or "space monsters." Let's start by defining a few basic, standard alien templates. This way, we'll have a springboard from which to launch ourselves into drawing more interesting aliens.

**Alien A:** Basic Humanoid. Easy to relate to, with standard-issue arms, legs and head. Mix in a few animal properties (note the hooves and horns), and he's finished. We've seen many of these types.

**Alien B:** Pretty common as well. Very 1950s: A humanoid evolved into a skinny, hairless guy with a massive intellect. (Yawn.)

**Alien C:** This alien is much more disturbing. Based upon insects—which seem to frighten most people—large, scary bug-aliens like this definitely earn their place on my cool list.

**Alien D:** A disgusting pile of puckering, tentacled, alien freakishness. Now this is my idea of an alien!

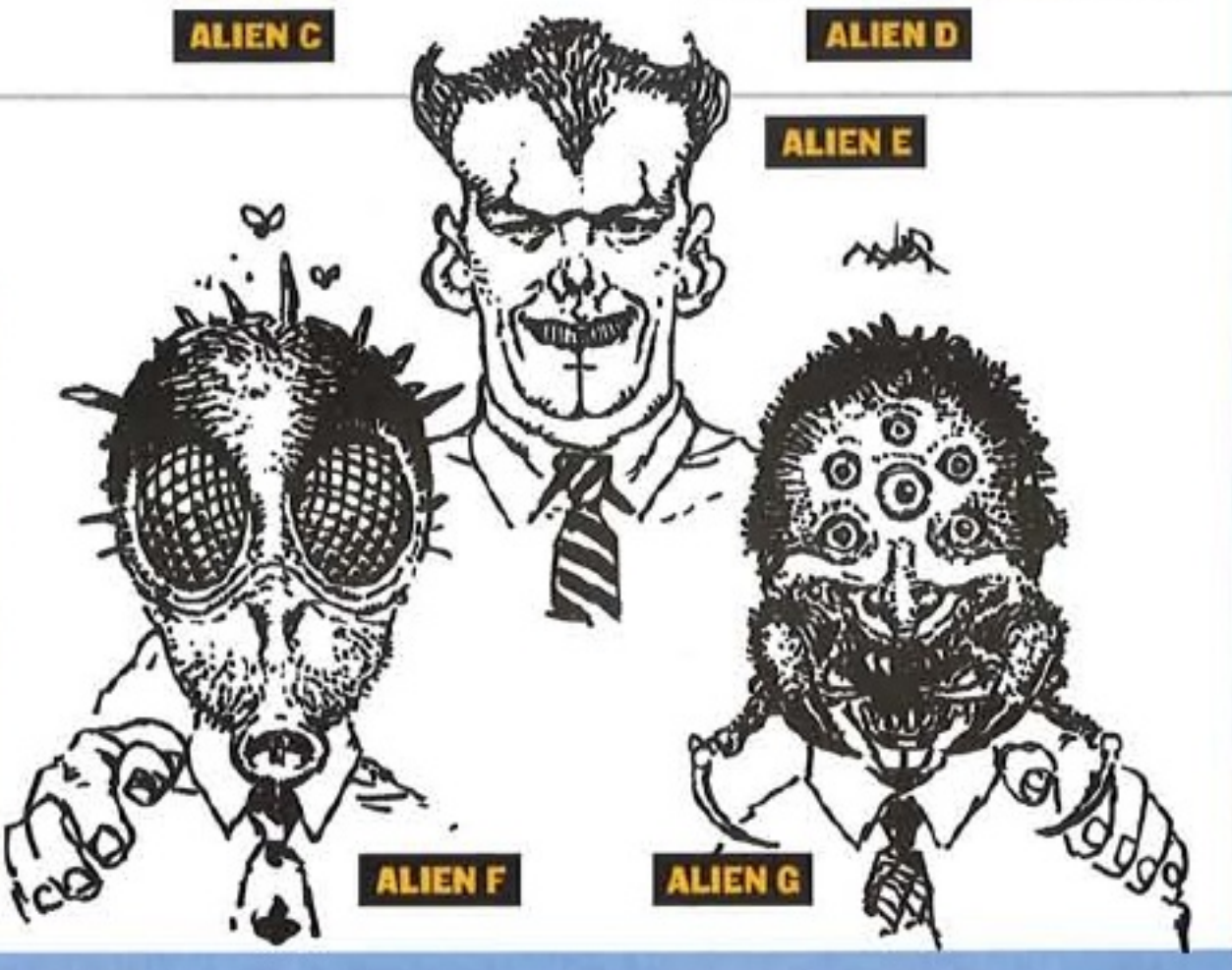


ALIEN A ALIEN B ALIEN C ALIEN D

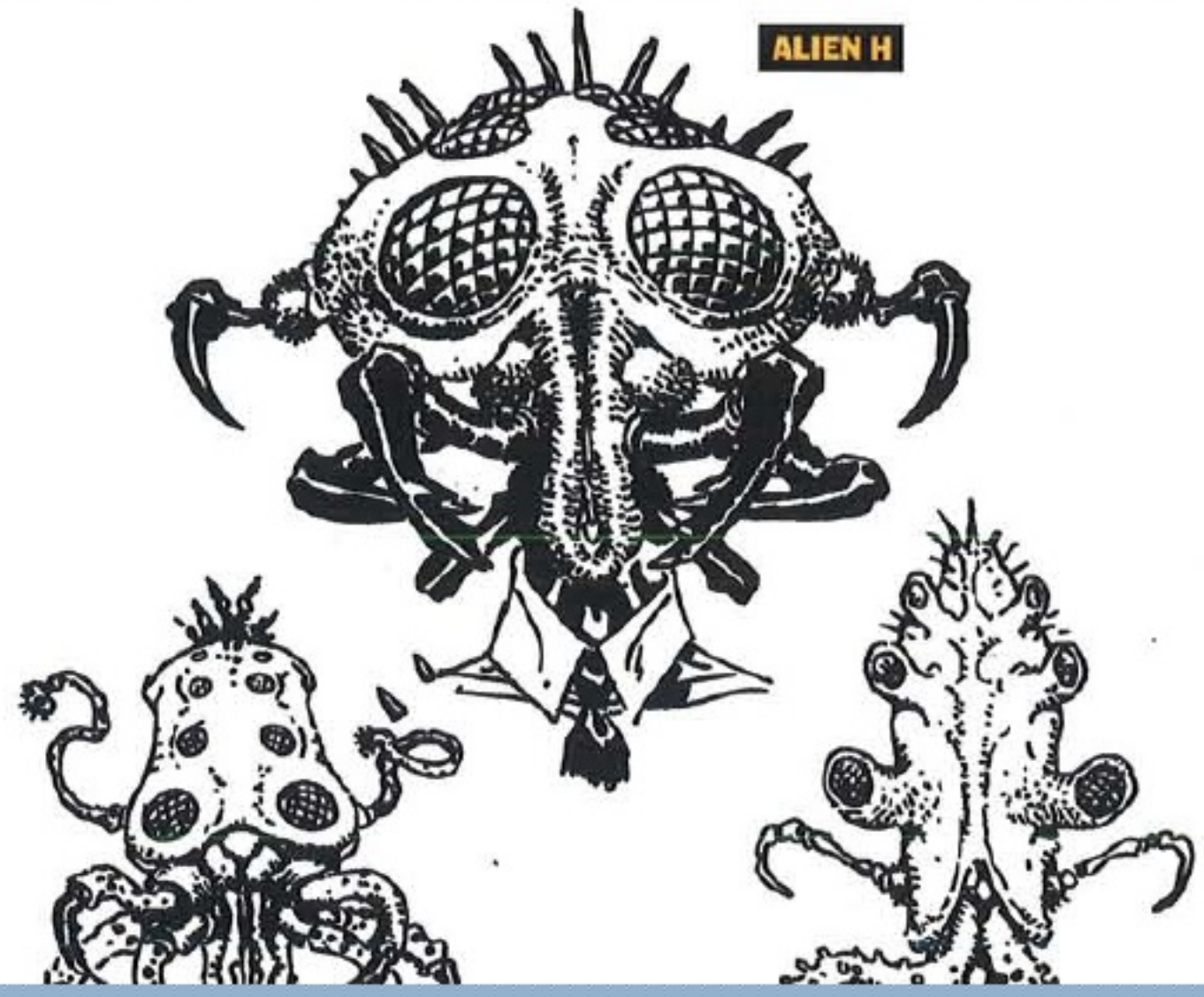
# I'VEJUST SEENAFACE

Now let's use what you know to create something better. First, take a look at **Alien E**—it's not too far off the beaten path. Most of us create the basic alien by slightly altering the independent features of your neighbor next door—adding more cranium space, tweaking the ears, etc. This can be done in a thousand variations.

**Aliens F** and **G:** These are derived from mixing in some bug (fly for **F**, spider for **G**). These two appear a bit comical, so we may want to scare them up a bit in the next example.



ALIEN E ALIEN F ALIEN G




## UGLYMUGS

Remember those fly and spider aliens from before? Let's mash them together for **Alien H**. Now we're getting somewhere. Very alien.

This technique of combining sources has always been very helpful to me, which brings us to **Aliens I** and **J**. Keeping with the basic concept arrived at in **Alien H**, I created new images.

In **Alien I**, I softened the face by adding some "squidness": tentacles with claws, elongated head, etc. **Alien J** gained protruding eyes and polyps on the tentacles. Note how one

## TIGHTENITUP

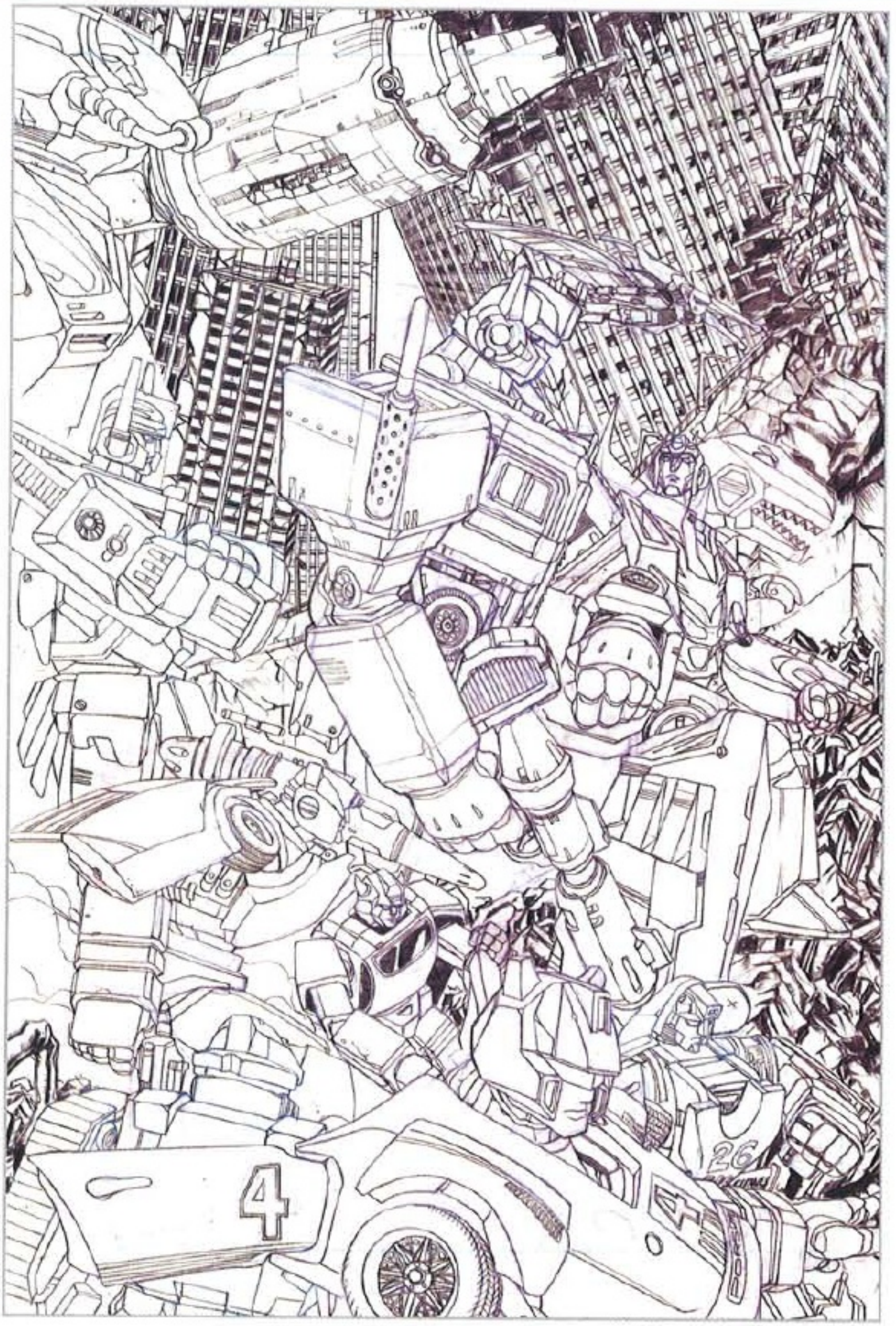
This stage will take most of your time. After blowing the layout up and enlarging it onto 11-by-17-inch board, I tighten up the lines a little using the character design sheets from my personal Transformers archive (see below). Pay attention to perspective, angles and shapes before adding any details. Reshape your cubes and cylindrical shapes as desired. Optimus Prime is the center of attention, so I made him large in comparison to the others—well, except Omega Supreme there in the background. You can still be a little rough at this point. I personally use blue lead for this particular stage. Concentrate on making sense when you draw tech: Try to make it look like it works. In between joints you can draw rotational devices and electrical wires, depending on how hi-tech you want to be.

I named this pin-up "The Front Line" because it's the last clash of the Autobots and Decepticons to conclude the ongoing war. I love epic tales, so this piece has epic imagery. Optimus is in the middle: He's the main focus, so he must stand out in comparison to the other Autobots. If I had colored this piece, I would have added many textures to the Autobots and rusted them up as if they have been warring for months. This piece also shows Optimus' leadership; he's standing in an unworried, human-like pose. Ultra Magnus is behind Optimus, since he's his right-hand man, and Rodimus Prime is looking at Optimus with a worried expression since he's got doubts about winning the war.

# MECHA

## THEGRANDFINALE

**Now we finalize our piece. I usually draw small heads to emphasize the sheer mass of the body. Round off the edges of each corner, and add lines for rust as if they've been through hell and back. Have a lot of open space, but balance that out by making the small areas extremely detailed. Robots created in the far future like Gundam have less bolts, and if they do have any, they are well hidden due to the metal plates that protect the main components. When I'm finished, James Raiz, my right-hand man, will fill in background detail to complete the page—in this case, broken-down buildings.**




**PRACTICE, DRAWING MECHA** and sooner or later you'll end up with something as cool as the Transformers or Voltron. Remember to ask yourself what kind of robot you're drawing—does it have human-like qualities? What are the strengths and weaknesses of your robot or robot race? Does it have artificial intelligence, or is someone behind the machine controlling it? Remember your basic shapes, and keep multiplying shapes on top of one another to form your robot. I hope this has helped you a little—good luck on them robots!

---

*Dream Engine honcho Pat Lee's pencils fight their battles in* Transformers/G.I. Joe, X-Men/Fantastic Four *and* Devil May Cry.

# ENERGY EFFECTS

BY PHIL JIMENEZ

Y'know, during the thirteen or so years I've been in comics, I've worked on a variety of characters with powers ranging from optic blasts to the elemental manipulation of the ocean. In that time, I've had to learn how to draw quite a few different types of "energy effects"—from fire to lightning to smoke and beyond—and their effects on the heroes and villains using them. Well, I'm here to suggest a few ways that you can draw these energies.

I can't stress enough, however, how important photo reference was and is to my learning about how these energy patterns really work, and what they look like. I hope you'll whip out those ol' science books and magazines, and check out the photos. Nothing like knowing the reality before drawing the fantasy, I say!

## WHITELIGHTNING

Say you're drawing Storm or Thor raining lightning down on some loser supervillain. Keep in mind, lightning never travels in a straight line; it often ripples and splits into smaller (and sometimes larger) bolts along the way. A good way to start is by drawing a single, curvy line to begin the shape of the actual lightning bolt **(Figure A-1)**. Once that's done, go in and add single lines for the tendrils attached **(Figure A-2)**. Space them out any way you wish—cluster them, or add new ones at an even distance from each other. When the first lightning line is finished, add some "weight" to it by drawing another line parallel to the first **(Figure A-3)**, but vary it enough so that parts of the tendril appear thicker in some spots than others. Just keep it moving, with a real "rhythm."

FIGURE A

You should also keep in mind that lightning is a light source, and its effects (like shadows and harsh lighting) should be reflected on the person casting it. The white light of the lightning is best seen splashed across a darker background: I suggest dark storm clouds, which only add to the mood **(Figure B)**. Finally, creating a lightning storm—not just a simple bolt—helps add to the intensity of the effect, and makes the character look more powerful.

FIGURE B

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# ENERGY EFFECTS

FIGURE C

## FIRE IN THE HOLE

There are a couple of ways to approach fire in comics: There's the "cartoon" version, where the fire is defined by a rippling line, or the more "reality-based" version, where the fire is defined by its destruction. I'm a sucker for a combination of both **(Figure C-1)**. Fire is a constantly changing object, and your drawing should reflect that. It's also a light source, so think harsh lighting **(Figure C-2)** and heavy shadows **(Figure C-3)**.

If you're going to draw "cartoony" fire—like the Human Torch's—use a series of curvy "waves," one in rapid succession of the other, making a jagged pattern **(Figure D)**. These little waves should vary in size, and their curls work best when pointing in one direction **(Figure E)**.

The more "reality-based" fire is created by drawing the dark areas and patterns of motion an inferno causes: small patches of black, contrasted with white, open areas **(Figure F)**. Where the flame is most intense, these smaller "licks" or "swirls" of black help indicate movement **(Figure G)**.

FIGURE D

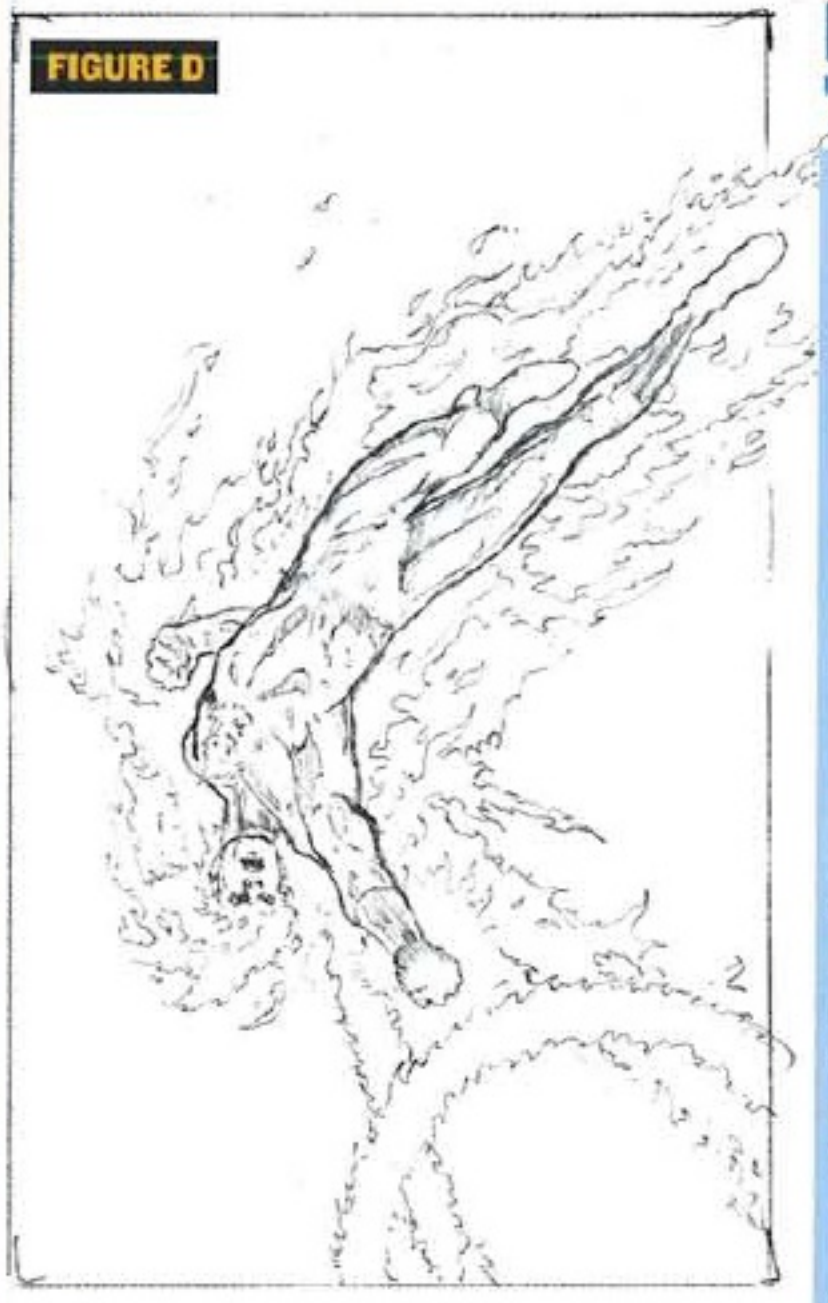


FIGURE F

FIGURE E

FIGURE G

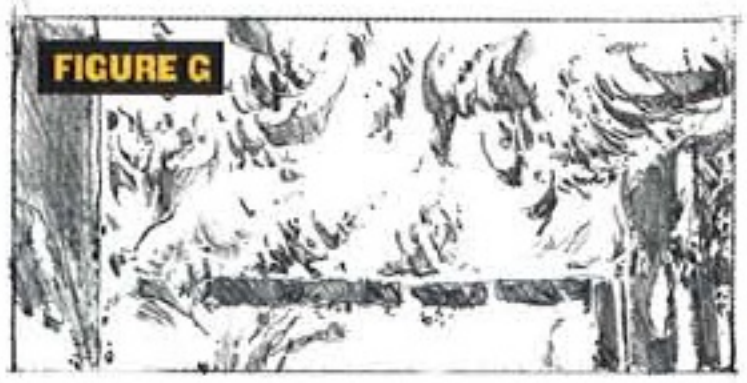
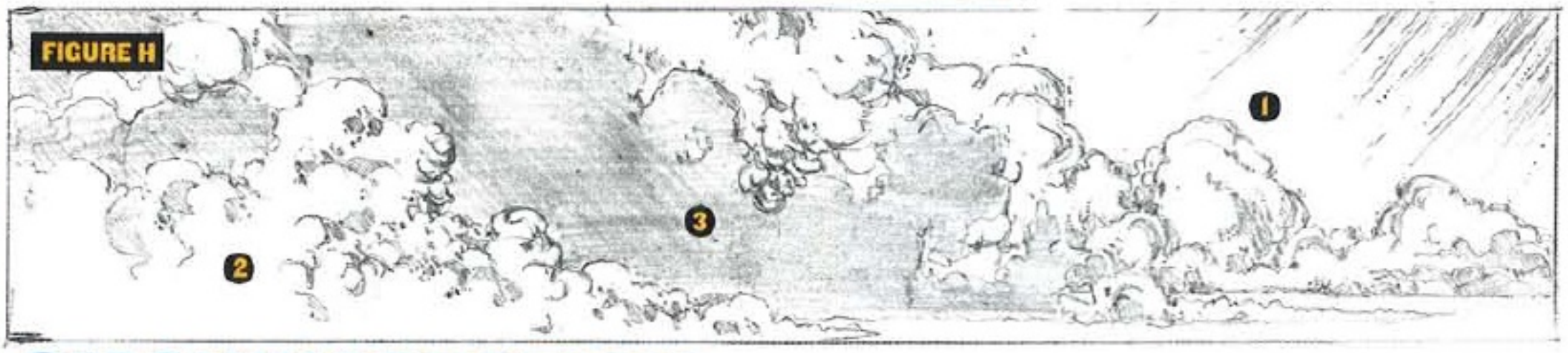


FIGURE H

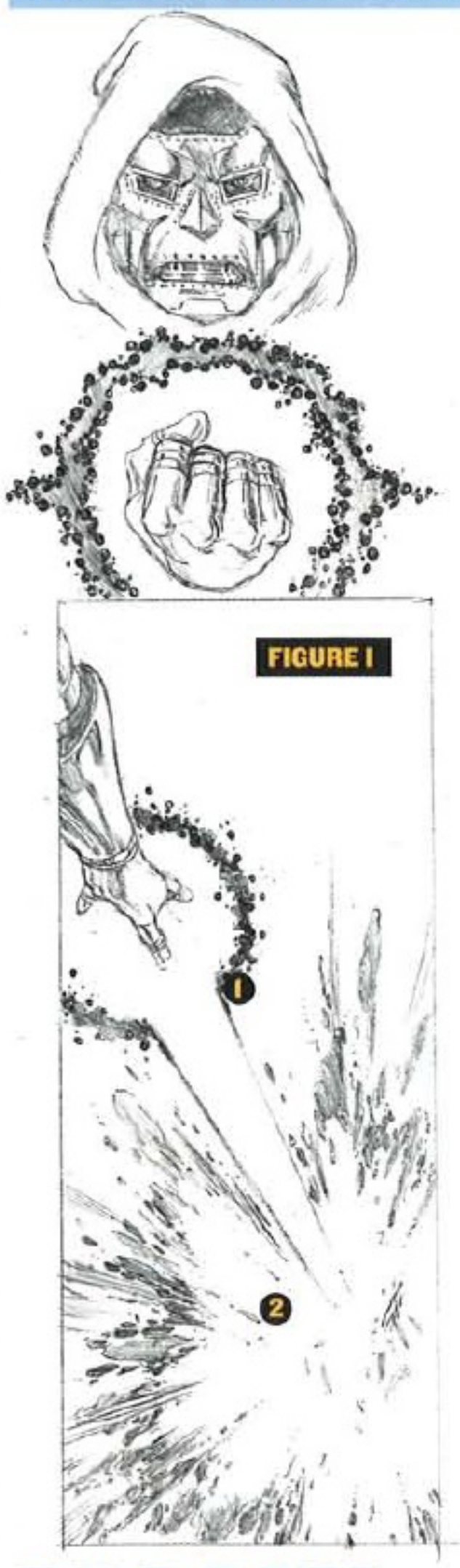



## SMOKING SECTION

Another constantly shifting element, smoke can often be exchanged for storm clouds in comics. Just imagine the lumpy consistency of mashed potatoes when you're drawing smoke, and you're on the right track **(Figure H-1)**. An easy way to start is by drawing a series of interconnecting circles, all varying greatly in size. After erasing most of the lines where the circles intersect, but still keeping their overall shape, you can go in and add the darker shadows on the circle edges to help define the cloud's shape **(Figure H-2)**. Also, smoke is often filled with large areas of solid black **(Figure H-3)**.

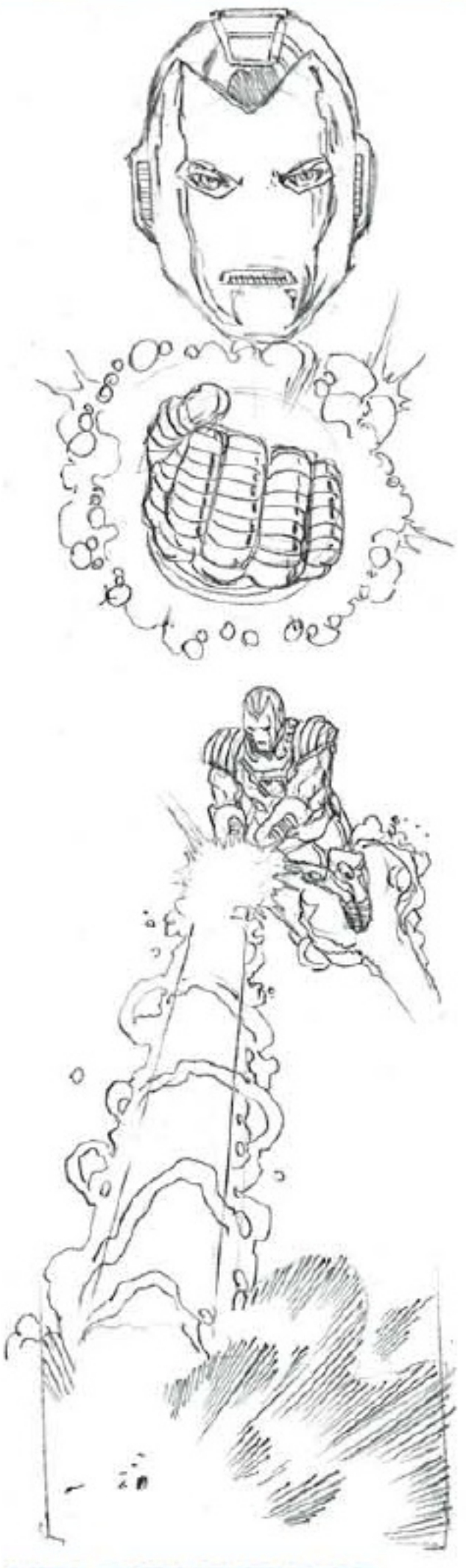
# ENERGYCRISIS

**Each of these characters projects energy signatures and "halos" surrounding their hands that are different and from one another. (I'll tell you more about "energy halos" later.)**




## DR.DOOM

Doctor Doom's hand is surrounded by "Kirby Crackle"—a ring composed of a rippling black band of small black circles. The band should look like it's constantly shifting and moving. Doom's energy blasts are composed of two jagged parallel lines emanating not from his hand, but from the energy halo surrounding it **(Figure 1-1)**. The energy blast itself is made of harsh, jagged lines, spreading out much like an ink splatter **(Figure 1-2)**.



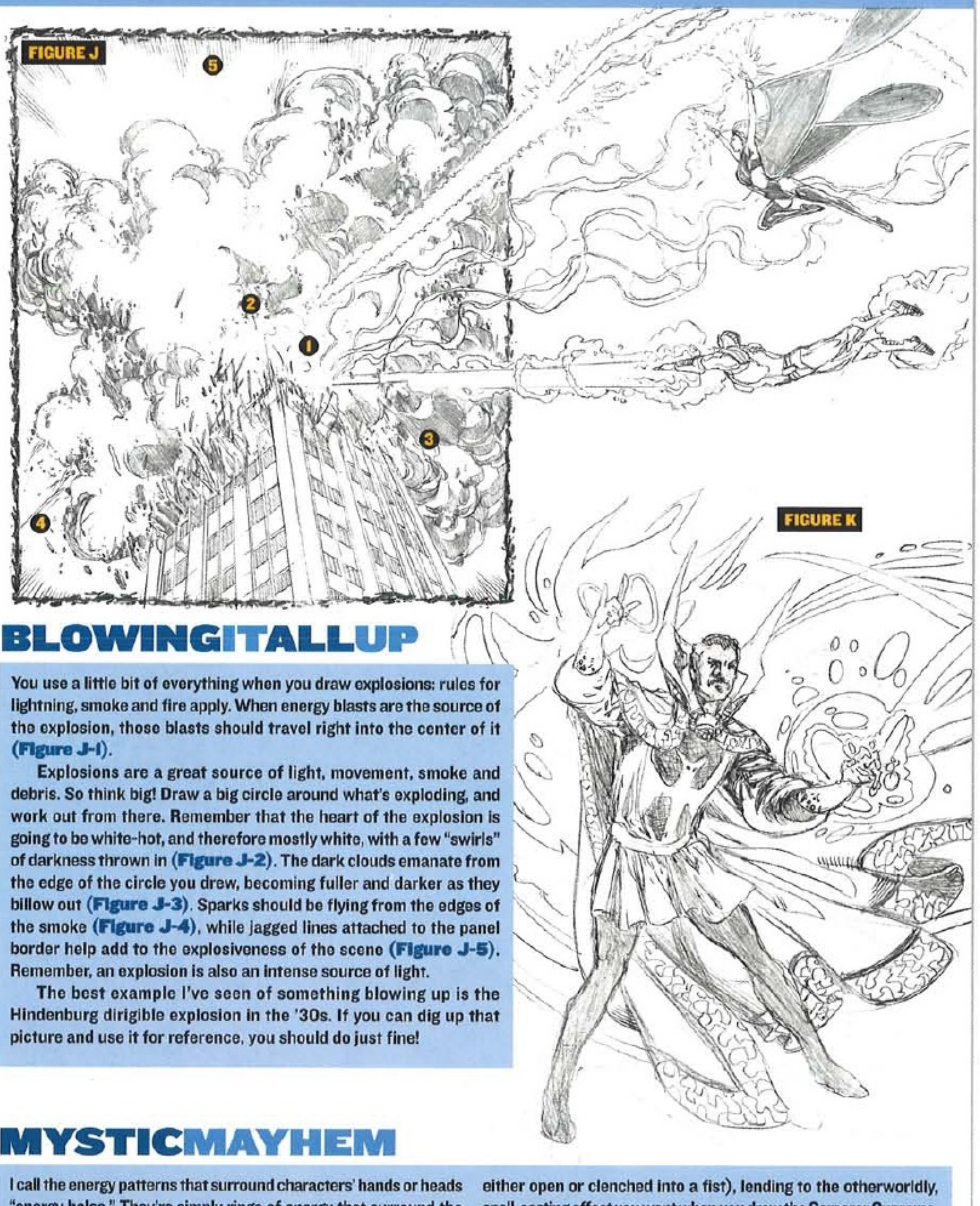
## IRONMAN

Iron Man projects a very clean, slick-looking energy. His energy halo is a circle around his hand, with clear circles that occasionally "burst" to indicate a clean, technological "crackle." His blast, is simply two straight parallel lines, with streams of energy wrapping around the length of the blast. When firing, all of the clear circles in his energy halo burst, transforming the halo into a collection of sharp, clean points emanating in all directions.

## PROFESSOR XAVIER

Professor X's telepathic powers are handled differently. The energy halo surrounds his hand and head, indicating his psionic energy. This is just one approach to the telepathic powers: thin, even lines in a wild swirl around his head. Telepathic powers are best defined when the body is almost stagnant, and the entirety of the energy and the blast comes from the figure's head. Keep in mind, though, that this method makes for a far less dynamic figure.

# ENERGY EFFECTS




## BLOWING IT ALL UP

You use a little bit of everything when you draw explosions: rules for lightning, smoke and fire apply. When energy blasts are the source of the explosion, those blasts should travel right into the center of it **(Figure J-1)**.

Explosions are a great source of light, movement, smoke and debris. So think big! Draw a big circle around what's exploding, and work out from there. Remember that the heart of the explosion is going to be white-hot, and therefore mostly white, with a few "swirls" of darkness thrown in **(Figure J-2)**. The dark clouds emanate from the edge of the circle you drew, becoming fuller and darker as they billow out **(Figure J-3)**. Sparks should be flying from the edges of the smoke **(Figure J-4)**, while jagged lines attached to the panel border help add to the explosiveness of the scene **(Figure J-5)**. Remember, an explosion is also an intense source of light.

The best example I've seen of something blowing up is the Hindenburg dirigible explosion in the '30s. If you can dig up that picture and use it for reference, you should do just fine!




## MYSTIC MAYHEM

I call the energy patterns that surround characters' hands or heads "energy halos." They're simply rings of energy that surround the head or hand. As we've seen earlier, there's an infinite variety to the way these halos, and the beams they emit, can look. Take a look at Dr. Strange here **(Figure K)**. The energy he projects emanates in strange, wavy bands and ribbons, for a very psychedelic effect. Even his hands are contorted (most energy-projecting characters keep them either open or clenched into a fist), lending to the otherworldly, spell-casting effect you want when you draw the Sorcerer Supreme.

A little aside: Doc Strange's energy halos are actually based on the designs of '60s-era rock posters in an art book I found. I think it's a perfect example of the sort of cool stuff you can find by looking at photographs and images in all sorts of books besides comics.

**I HOPE YOU FOUND** something useful here, something you can add to your repertoire of techniques which so many other great artists have shown you through the pages of this book. Whatever you do, just keep drawing because you love it, and never lose sight of how much fun it can actually be.

# HOW I DO SOUND EFFECTS

BUT MORE THAN THAT, I LIKE TO FOOL AROUND WITH SOUND EFFECTS.

THEY CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN THAT COMIC BOOK YOU'RE WORKING ON...

...BECAUSE THEY CAN REALLY ENHANCE THE IMMEDIACY OF THE STORY FOR YOUR READER.

MISS SOUND EFFECTS

SMAK!

PRETTY ENHANCED, HUH?

HEY! OVER HERE, PAL.

I'LL SHOW YOU HOW...

...BUT FIRST, LEMME TAKE YOU ON A LITTLE TOUR THROUGH SOUND!

REMEMBER...)

BUMP

...COMICS ARE A HYBRID MEDIUM, A UNIQUE COMBINATION OF WORDS AND PICTURES...

...WHERE THE PICTURES AMPLIFY AND AUGMENT THE WORDS (OR VICE VERSA!)...

...AND THE WORDS ACTUALLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE COMPOSITION OF THE DRAWING ITSELF.

FLOAT! LIFT

GRRR!

SO SOUND EFFECTS CARRY A DOUBLE LOAD. THEY NOT ONLY HAVE TO CREATE A PHONETIC INTERPRETATION OF WHATEVER SOUND YOU NEED...

...LIKE THIS...

BLAM!

...BUT THEY BECOME AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE PICTURE ITSELF.

LIKE THIS!

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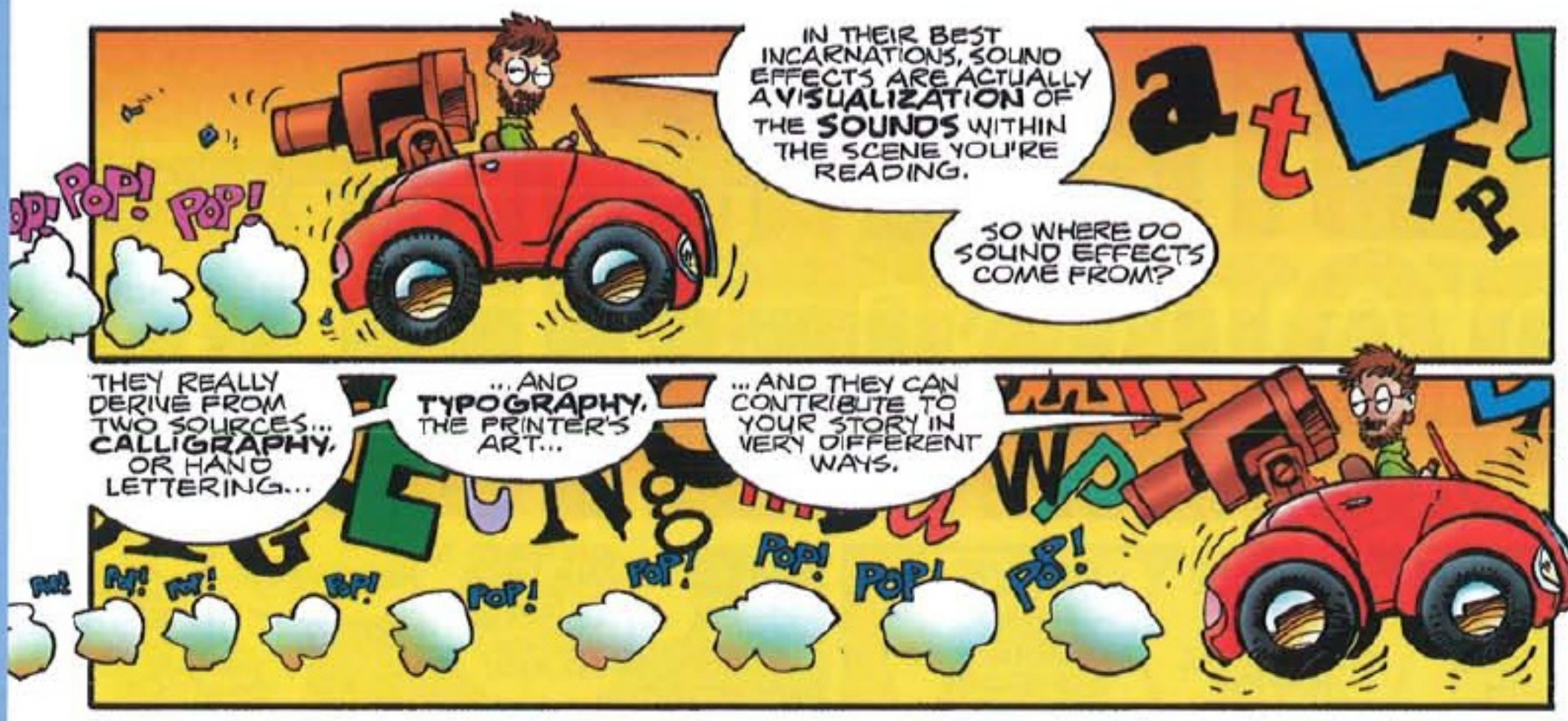
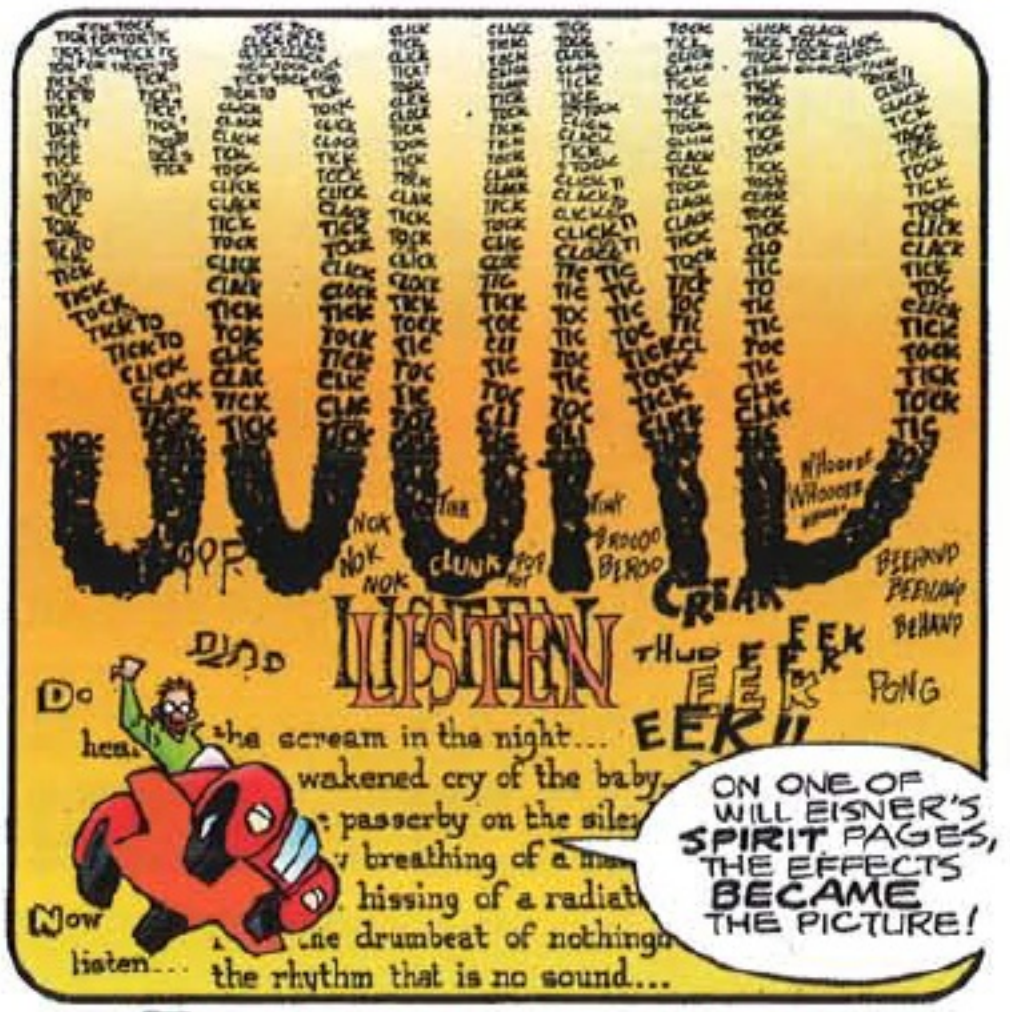
# SOUNDEFFECTS





I'M INTERESTED IN TYPOGRAPHY **AND** CALLIGRAPHY AND I BRING **BOTH** THESE ELEMENTS TO MY WORK...

...USING THEM TO SHAPE THE LETTERING I DESIGN.

OLD STUFF

LET ME GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE.

IN THIS **CAPTAIN FEAR** JOB, A STORY OF PIRACY ON THE HIGH SEAS DONE FOR DC, I DELIBERATELY CHOSE A **CASLON** TYPEFACE.

IT'S AN OLD-FASHIONED FACE WITH A SLIGHTLY MOTH-EATEN LOOK I THOUGHT WOULD EMPHASIZE THE **ANTIQUITY** OF THE TALE...

...SORT OF LIKE THE BROADSHEETS OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

TH-BOOM!

I ONCE USED THE WORD "**DOOM**" AS A SOUND EFFECT, A PICTORIAL ELEMENT, A NARRATIVE DEVICE, **AND** THE TITLE FOR THE STORY...

...ALL IN THE SAME PICTURE IN **THE MIGHTY THOR!**

LUCKY FOR ME WORDS DON'T DEMAND **OVER-TIME.**

DOOM!

AND IN A RECENT **STAR SLAMMERS** STORY FOR **DARK HORSE PRESENTS**, I ADDED A DOUBLE OUTLINE AROUND THE TITLE, BOTH TO **EM-BOLDEN** THE WORDS...

...AND TO SUGGEST THE FEVER DREAM/HALLUCINOGENIC QUALITY OF THE STORY SUGGESTED BY THE TITLE ITSELF*.

Fever Dream

*OKAY, SO A TITLE **ISN'T** STRICTLY A SOUND EFFECT. SO SUE ME. ACTUALLY, **JOHN WORKMAN** SHOULD SUE ME. HE'S THE GUY WHO DOES MOST OF MY LETTERING THESE DAYS. IT WAS **HIS** TITLE.

# SOUNDEFFECTS

*THESE ARE THIN PLASTIC SHEETS PRINTED WITH RUB-OFF LETTERS THAT CAN BE APPLIED TO ARTWORK.

COOL LETTERFORMS ARE OUT THERE ALL **OVER** THE PLACE, JUST WAITING FOR YOU TO FIND THEM.

NOW START BY DRAWING A RECTANGLE THE SIZE AND LOCATION OF THE SOUND EFFECT YOU WANT ON YOUR PICTURE.

THAT LOOKS PRETTY GOOD. BIG AND BOLD. AND WE'LL PUT IT ON AN ANGLE TO GIVE IT **EMPHASIS!**

I USUALLY ADD A GRID TO GIVE ME GUIDANCE, BOTH FOR THE VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL OUTLINES OF THE LETTER-FORMS...

...AND FOR HELPING ME SPACE THE LETTERS CORRECTLY.

KEEP IN MIND THAT THE SPACE YOU LEAVE **BETWEEN** THE LETTERS IS AS IMPORTANT TO THE WAY THE WHOLE WORD LOOKS AS THE FORMS OF THE LETTERS ARE THEMSELVES.

ROARR

TOO **LITTLE** SPACE, THE LETTERS LOOK CRAMPED.

ROARR

TOO **MUCH** SPACE, THEY LOOK LIKE THEY BELONG TO DIFFERENT WORDS.

NOW I ROUGH IN THE LETTERS FREEHAND.

I CHECK MY SPACING AND LETTERFORMS TO MAKE SURE THEY LOOK RIGHT. YOUR **EYE** IS YOUR GUIDE. LISTEN TO WHAT IT TELLS YOU.

NOW WE'LL PUT IN THE SPECIFIC SHAPES OF THE LETTERS. FIRST WE'LL USE A STRAIGHT-EDGE...

...AUGMENTED BY A LITTLE FRENCH CURVE WORK.

CHECK THE WORD AGAIN WITH THE EYE. SO FAR, SO GOOD.

INDIA INK

FRENCH CURVE

THEN TRACE THE WHOLE THING OVER IN INDIA INK.

TECHNICAL PENS SUCH AS RAPIDOGRAPHS WORK WELL FOR THIS PART OF THE JOB.

# SOUNDEFFECTS

# SPLASH PAGES

BY JIM CALAFIORE

Show 'em where ya live. When I was a kid, playing baseball in Little League, that's what we'd yell out to a teammate batting at the plate—"Show 'em where ya live." It meant, *hit a home run.* It was a challenge wrapped up in encouragement—just like each chance to draw a splash page. Whenever I get a new plot and I'm going over the splash page, I feel like the writer is saying *"Show 'em where ya live!"* It's my opportunity to knock one out of the park.

Which is why I start to look for a place to hide when I sometimes hit a dribbler to third. Everyone does it from time to time, but it's not a good thing, so let's look at how I try to avoid that.

## STEPPINGUPTOTHEPLATE

There's often more than one chance in an issue for a home run, but what we're examining here is the opening splash page, usually on page one. It can be the most important page, and more than just a "money shot." It sets the tone of the story. Ideally, it grabs the reader and propels him into the rest of the issue.

And, from a strictly mercenary point of view, it can determine a sale to the browsing customer. If the splash doesn't grab them, back in the rack it goes. First impressions can be everything.

Here's our scenario: An action shot. The Hulk and Daredevil are in mid-battle on a New York City street, devastation all around. The Hulk is pounding the pavement with a powerhouse blow that ol' Hornhead has just leapt clear of.

### PRO TIPS

**TAKE A STAND**

"A person's posture can tell us his age, social status, vocation, even what he's thinking. Concentrate on the spine, shoulders and bend of the knee." —Rags Morales, *Identity Crisis*

## THESWING

My first step in working out an image is a series of small sketches called thumbnails. They're very rough—the characters barely more than stick-figures—but it's the best way to run through ideas quickly.

These first two are similar. In both I'm using the perspective lines of the building to focus the eye. **Figure A** is looking down at the combatants in a crater of destruction, while **Figure B** is at ground level looking on from one end of a trail of destruction. The perspective gives a nice feel, but both suffer from the same shortcoming. The characters are too far away from us. On a splash, unless there's a plot reason against it, I want to be close to the action.

FIGURE A

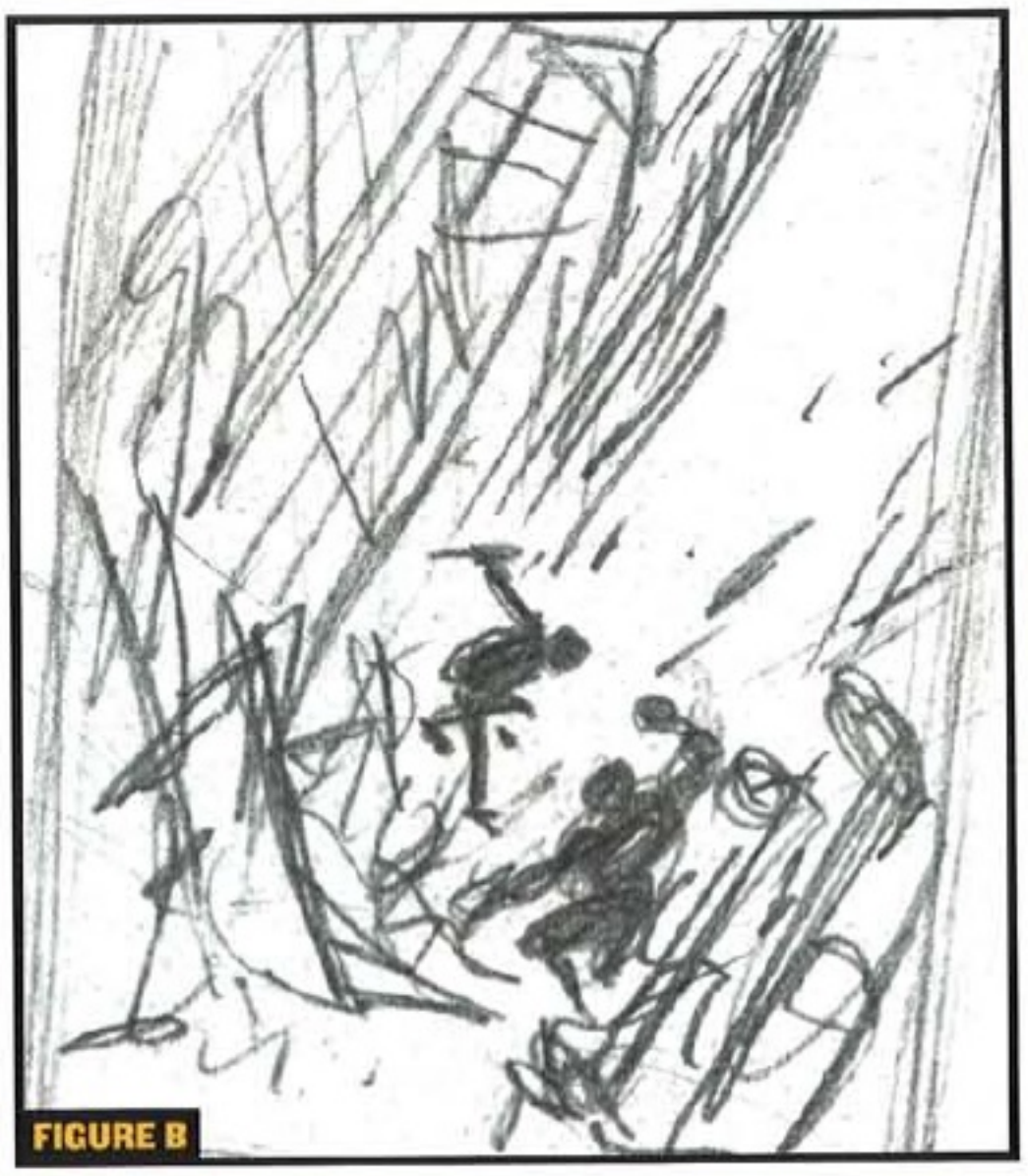


FIGURE B

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FIGURE C

## THEFOLLOW-THROUGH

The next idea, **Figure C**, is fine, but that's all it is. Everything is there (the Hulk, DD, the city in the background, etc.), but I didn't do anything interesting with it. I'll often have an "O.K." idea which I'll take a second look at, and think about rotating the camera for more interesting positions.

FIGURE D

**Figure D**'s better. Moving the camera around to behind Daredevil now has the Hulk coming more towards us, involving us in the action. The only problem here is that Daredevil isn't facing us. I want both characters facing us, so I played with the DD figure separately **(Figure E)**. I used the old facing-us-but-not-facing-us dodge: Twisting the figure by turning Daredevil's torso mostly towards us, then turning his head to look back at the Hulk, keeps his face at least in profile.

FIGURE E

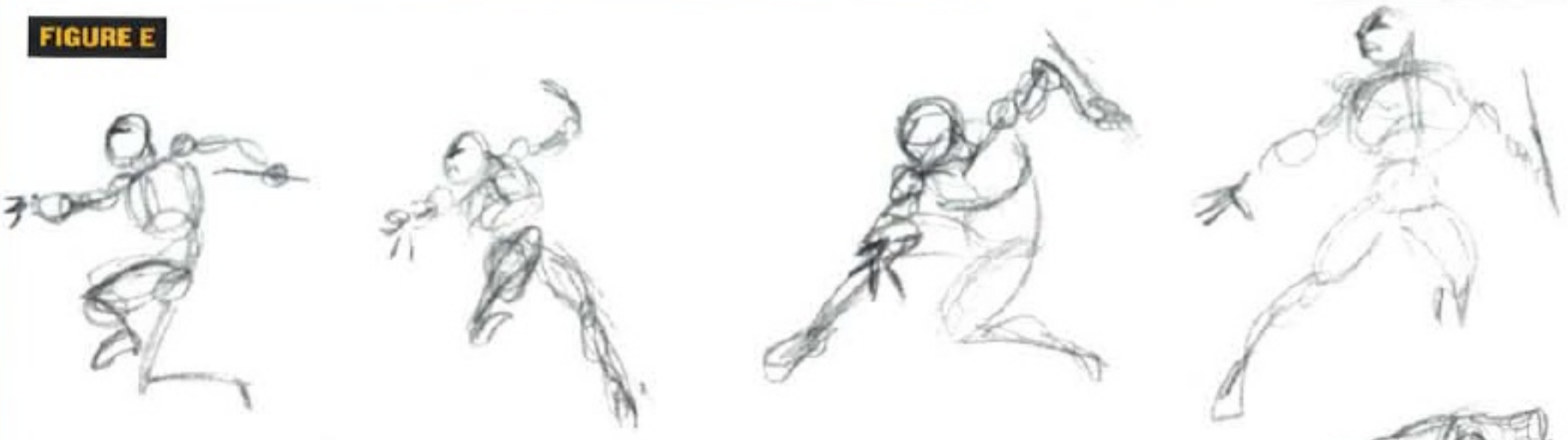


FIGURE F

I also wanted to tweak the Hulk a bit. His motion in the thumbnail is down and to the left, away from Daredevil. To have him going at DD, I just flopped the figure **(Figure F)**. But I still wasn't happy with the pose, and pushed it further to put more oomph in the blow. Look at **Figure G**—he's really jack-hammering the street now! All of which led to the next step.

FIGURE G

FIGURE H

## STRIKEONE

**Figure H** is a larger, more detailed sketch, putting it all together. "But why isn't it finished?" you ask. Well, at this point I realized it wasn't working. Remember, I said that the first splash should propel the reader through the rest of the book. While I now have a more interesting angle, there just isn't enough excitement. That's the point of this process: to find what doesn't work as well as what does.

Oh well, back to the drawing board. Literally.

FIGURE I

# DON'T OVERDO IT

Everyone who draws tries to do the very best they can. It's part of the pleasure (and frustration) of drawing. Pursuing that effort often results in overdoing it. This is especially true in inking. Knowing what to leave out is as important as knowing what to put in.

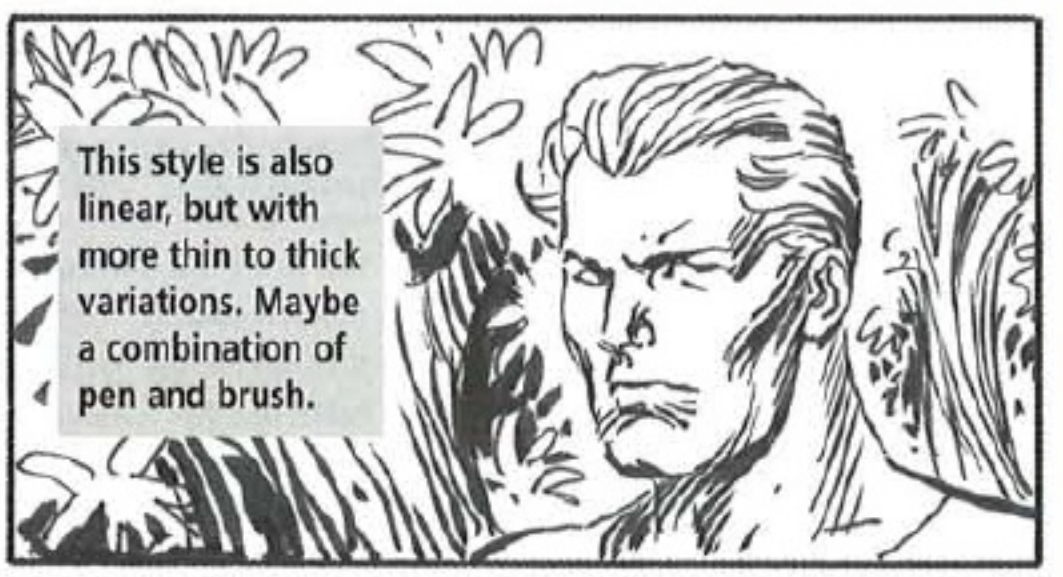
In inking, less is often more. That is, the simpler and cleaner the rendering, the more effective the drawing.

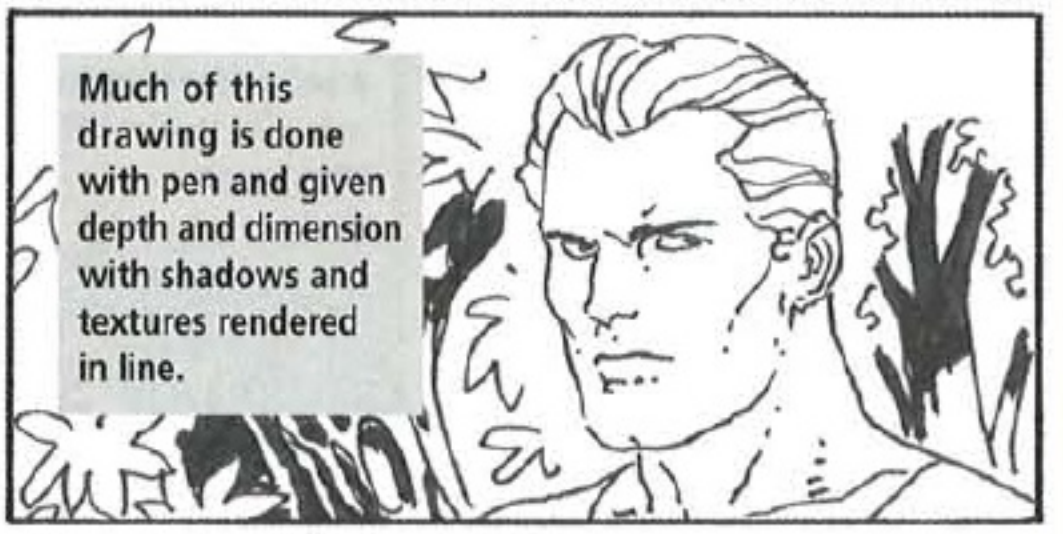
• Humor cartoons are a good example of inking with a minimum of detailed rendering. This style of inking is also used in cinematic animation. Because of the multiple number of drawings used to create motion and smooth transition, simplicity is a requirement.

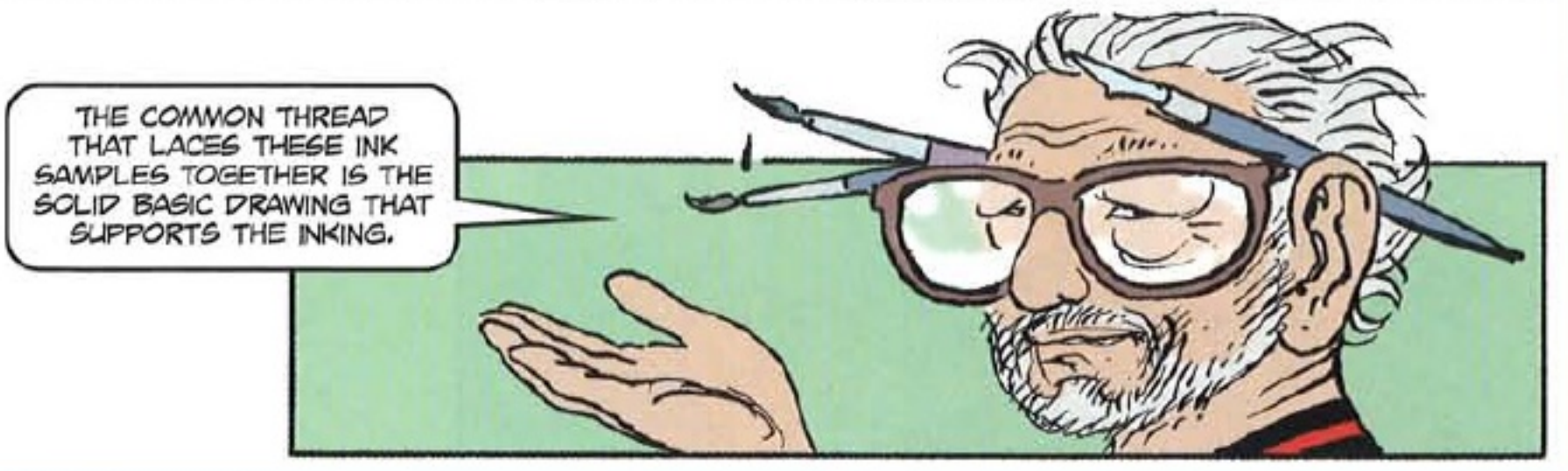
• Many aspiring cartoonists think "simple" means easy. Quite the opposite is true. It's much easier to overly complicate a drawing with too much rendering than it is to know precisely which line is the right line and to leave all the extraneous lines out.

# STYLES

Inking styles are as variable as the artists who draw them. There is no right or wrong style. An artist's style is always in a state of flux; always changing. It is a reflection of his learning process and experience. The style you start with may not be the style with which you end up.





# INKING

## CORRECTIONS

After inking your artwork, the pencils need to be erased. This must be done with an eraser that will not smear or pick up the ink. I use a Magic Rub eraser. This eraser is also included in the equipment with all my correspondence courses.

Use the eraser gently. Brush off all erasure particles when you're finished.

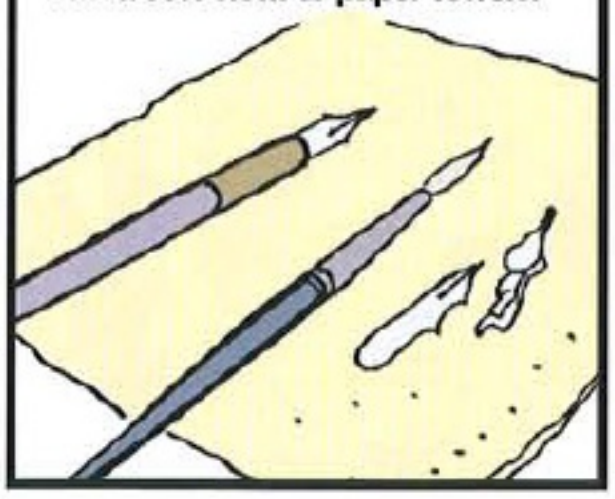
Pencils have erasers to correct mistakes. Inkers use opaque white paint for that purpose. For corrections, white paint should have the consistency of sour cream. If the paint is too thin or watery, the ink will show through. Sometimes it's necessary to apply two or three coats of paint before the ink is completely covered.

One form of white paint is water-soluble. That means you can not ink on top of it, because the ink will flake off or mix with the paint. Another form of white paint is non-soluble. It has a plastic base and ink will not flake off. It's a correction fluid used to correct typing errors and is available in squeeze pens and bottles.

I THINK IT'S BEST TO MAKE CORRECTIONS AFTER ERASING THE PENCILS, ONCE THE INK IS DRY. THE WHITE TENDS TO GET DIRTY IF YOU MAKE THE CORRECTIONS BEFORE YOU ERASE THE PENCILS.

## MAINTENANCE OF YOUR TOOLS

Artists develop different ways of taking care of their equipment. This is the way I take care of mine. As I've mentioned before, your tools are expensive. I wash my pens and brushes after each use. I dry them with a soft cloth or paper towels.



Ink has a tendency to coagulate at the neck of the brush handle. Every once in a while I'll use a mild detergent soap to work out the accumulation of dried ink. After I wash the soap away, I dip my brush into hair conditioner, and let it stay for a few minutes. Then I shake it out in clean water and dry the brush to a point. Never allow a wet brush to dry in a bent shape. That's a perfect way to kill a brush.

Pen points should be cleaned after use. If you allow the ink to dry on the nib for a long period of time, two things will happen: A) The ink drying on your nib will cause your pen lines to be thicker, losing the ability to make a fine line. B) Leaving ink on your nib overnight will make it more difficult to clean. Ink adheres more strongly the longer the time between cleanings.

# POWERFUL INKING

BY STEVE LIEBER

Hi! I'm Steve Lieber. I've been working in comics for about 18 years on projects like *Whiteout*, *On the Road to Perdition* and *Hellboy: Weird Tales*. I studied at the Joe Kubert School, and my goal as an artist is simple: to tell good stories. One way to do that is by carefully composing black ink on the page, also called "spotting blacks." The careful placement of areas of solid black in a line-art drawing separates a professional job from an amateurish one. Well-placed areas of black make a picture easier to decipher, control the viewer's focus, enhance the illusion of depth, establish the direction of light and make a picture look better. In a color comic, your composition of black will help a good colorist understand your intentions and keep an amateur colorist from screwing up too much. If you're drawing a black-and-white comic, those dark areas are even more important: They're your loudest note and your most reliable tool for ensuring that your pictures communicate what you want them to.

## CONTROLTHEFOCUS

Here's a rule every artist should remember: The eye is drawn to the point of highest contrast. With every picture, you should decide what your point of focus is—where do you want them to look?

Don't say "everywhere," because a comic reader is going to look at your picture out of the corner of his eye while he reads the word balloon and then goes on to the next panel. Your picture may only have a second or two to make its point. Ask yourself what the reader needs to learn from this picture, then make that part of the picture the point of highest contrast—a white object against black, or a black object against white. In **Figure A**, the eye is drawn to the gun. In **Figure B**, the gun is less important than the sign in the window. (By the way, that's Carrie Stetko, the U.S. marshal from *Whiteout* by me and Greg Rucka from Oni Press.)

FIGURE A

FIGURE B

# POWERFULINKING

## FRAMED

You may find it helpful to "frame" your important areas, or to arrange your blacks so they surround the important parts of your picture. In **Figure C**, I used black to make a ring around the box in the middle. It's like the center of a bullseye. Also note the same technique in **Figure D**, directing your attention right to Carrie's discovery.

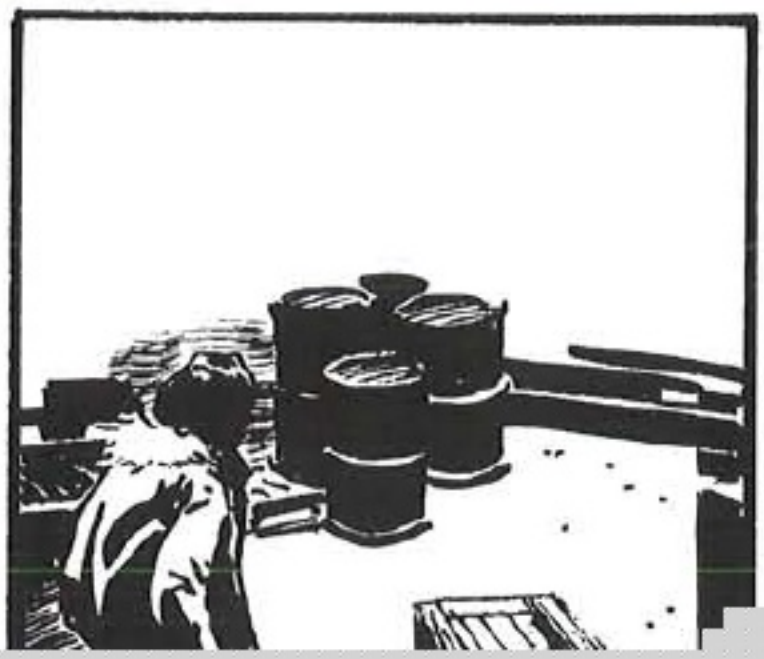


FIGURE D

## BACKINBLACK

With a dark-costumed character like Black Panther, on the other hand, there's a lot of interplay with the black areas within the figure itself. In these cases I like to let the shadowed/black areas run together, skirting confusion of the image. If he had a chest emblem, like Daredevil, I'd surround it with black so that it pops out like a beacon.

I've left the underside of the cape mostly open here for the purpose of demonstration. This isn't the best way to handle it, relying too much on cover to complete the image. With the examples at right, I've filled completely the underside of the cape with black.

FIGURE H

FIGURE I

In **Figure H**, I didn't change the shading on the arm. While it's still legible, it doesn't quite work. It's too connected to the cape and is almost sucked back into it.

In **Figure I**, I've added a few highlight areas to the arm. These halos allow the arm to pop and come forward more. Also helping this effect is the drop shadow from the cape onto the arms. Shadows cast from objects can increase a drawing's three-dimensional effect. The heavy shadow across the forearm makes it feel like the arm is emerging from deeper recesses of the cape.

## AHULKING SHADOW

Easily recognizable silhouettes can substitute for the characters in any number of ways. The Hulk's shadow, for instance, carries almost as much weight as he does. This poor guy is practically beaten down by it. Surrounded by so much absolute black, I haven't placed too much heavy shadow within the figure, but what there is of it bleeds into the black of the Hulk's shadow, keeping this unlucky fellow firmly pinned against that wall.

## PUTTINGIT TOGETHER

Okay, let's put these techniques to practical use. Here's Wolverine in not too good of a situation. Having been through some sort of tussle, and apparently unaware of Sabretooth's presence, he's paused in front of a chain-link fence. Not much of an obstacle for Wolverine, but as a visual element it cages him, heightening the tension. To intensify that, I let the shadow of the fence fall across him. The cage now affects him "physically."

Also, I've kept almost all of Wolvie's shading from running into the black background so he remains separate from it, and more in the foreground. (To do that, I used internal halos here, just as I did in the "B" Thor figure from the first section of this column.)

In contrast, all of Sabretooth's blacks, including the dark areas of his costume, merge with the background, connecting him to it. (Yep, this time I went with the shading technique seen in the "C" Thor figure from the first section.) We get the effect of him emerging menacingly from the shadows. Could Sabretooth really sneak up on Wolverine? 'Course not, but it makes for a cool image.

## PRO TIPS

### COVER STORY

"I generally try to keep the action on my covers moving left to right. That's how most people read, and the eye is trained to move in that direction." —Joe Quesada, *Daredevil: Father*

**AND THAT'S ABOUT IT.** Of course, shadows can also hide some shortcomings, like the fact that I can't draw a decent self-portrait. That's me to the right. No, really! Thanks for reading, and beware the shadows.

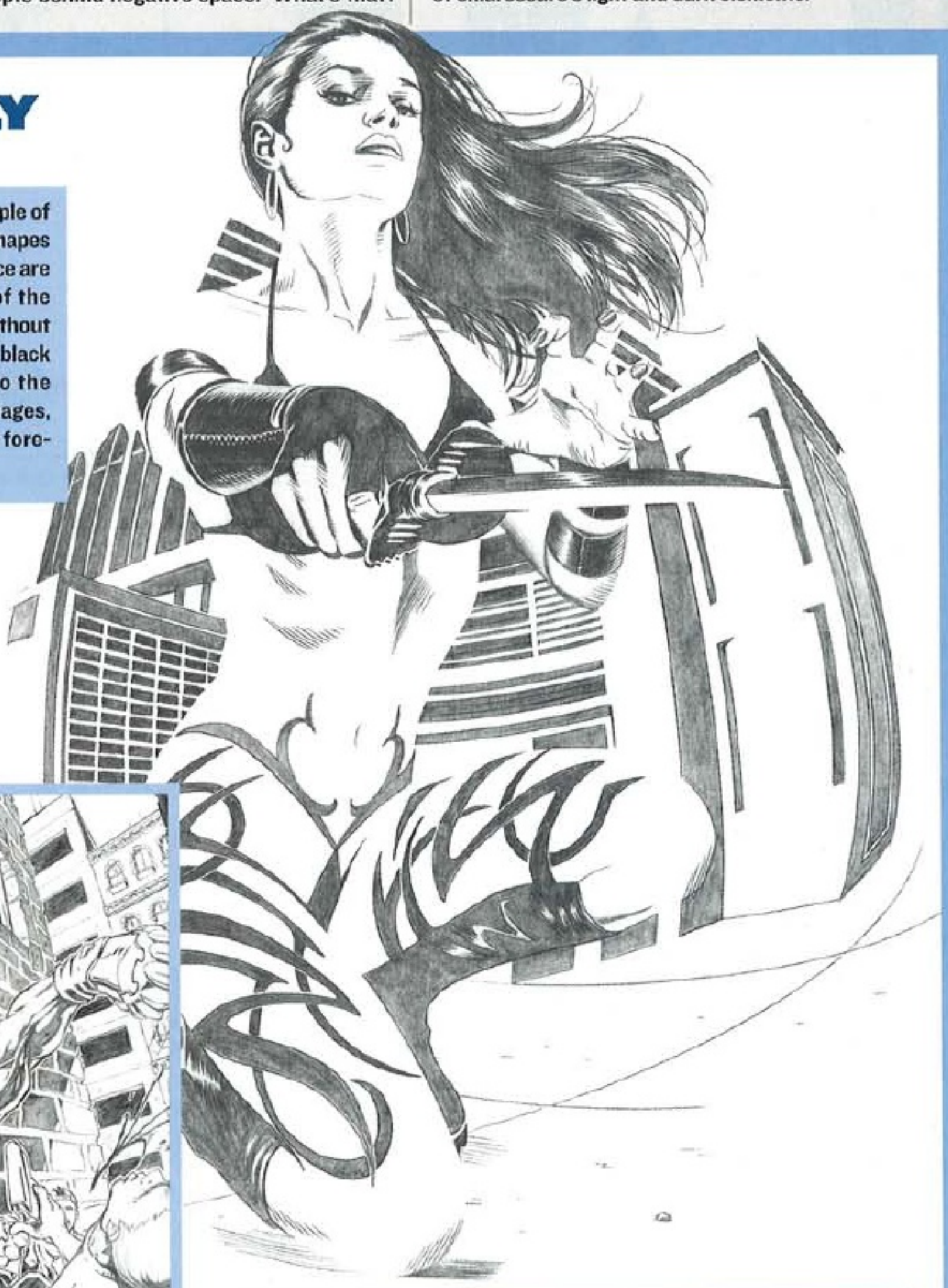
# NEGATIVE SPACE

BY GREG HORN

Hi everyone. I'm Greg Horn. Before I developed my painting techniques, I penciled for many years, and this provided a great basic knowledge of design and composition I would later use on my color illustrations. Today, we're going to study a few of the concepts behind negative space. What's that? Well, it's not the place where Annihilus holds his house parties! Negative space is a powerful tool of the artist, and in this lesson, I'm going to reveal a few of its secrets. With proper designing of your negative spaces, you can achieve better balance of composition and a greater sense of chiaroscuro's light and dark elements.

## POSITIVELY NEGATIVE

This first drawing is a good example of the techniques. Here, the black shapes I used to design the negative space are visually describing the curve of the woman's hip, waist and back without using any outline work. The solid black tattoos on her legs conform to the roundness of her lovely appendages, giving the illusion of depth and foreshortening by themselves.



The most important aspect of a negative space illustration is the planning of the composition before you even start drawing. It's a good idea to consider beforehand where the black and white areas are going to be placed in the negative and positive spaces. Without a proper balance of these areas, the scene can become hard to decipher, like this example.

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# NEGATIVESPACE

FIGURE A

## YOU'RE SURROUNDED

Negative space is the term used to describe the areas surrounding the main subject. And the area that the main subject occupies is called (you guessed it) positive space. Above, this simple image of Elektra (**Figure A**) was created by filling in only the negative space areas around her with black. In essence, this is a drawing of Elektra made by actually not drawing her at all.

I must admit, an all-black background is pretty damn lame, isn't it? So the next step is to break up the background by spotting black areas in the negative space that correspond with the spotting of the white areas in the positive space.

FIGURE B

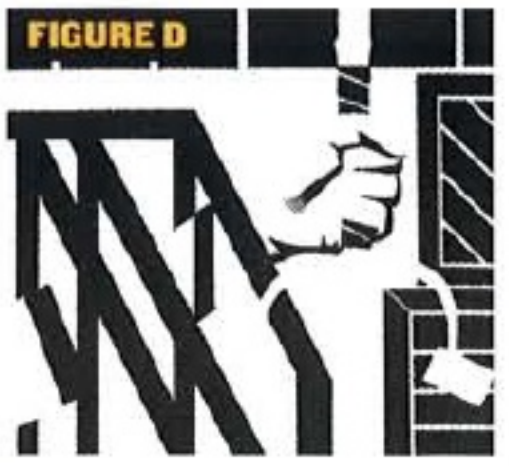
## SEESPOTRUN

In real life, there are no outlines and omitting them from your art can add a graphic realism to your scenes. Invisible lines depend on carefully designed "black spotting" to work correctly.

Spotting black areas refers to the technique of carefully placing black areas in your artwork to strengthen the composition—these black areas can occupy negative or positive space. If you combine the concepts behind spotting blacks with negative space drawing, you get an illustration like **Figure B**. Notice how I have spotted the black areas in the negative space, so that they correspond with adjacent white areas in the positive space and vice versa—there are enough black areas edging her cap to show the shape clearly without an outline, creating an "invisible line" there. Invisible lines are also created inside the positive space of this drawing—the outline of her right wrist is not drawn here, but it is implied by the edges of her wristbands and hair.

FIGURE C

FIGURE D



## ININVISIBILITY WETRUST

In the drawing to the left (**Figure C**), there is no outline to represent Elektra's arm, but the spotting of black areas in the negative space clearly show the edges of the positive space for the reader. I have trust that readers will decipher these unseen lines in their mind's eye. Additionally, the black shapes representing her armbands are curved to give the illusion of volume to her arm.

## GOINGOFFON TANGENTS

In line drawings, tangencies really suck, but in a drawing with invisible lines, tangents are 100 times more damaging to the clarity of your scene. Tangency is the term used to describe the confusing effect of line work from different elements in your scene intersecting inadvertently. This effect is compounded if the lines are going in the same direction. Check out this worst-case scenario (**Figure D**). It's practically the same panel as the one to the left, except the diagonal shapes of the background intersect with Elektra's armbands and the hilt of her sai intersects with the window frame. Additionally, the blade doesn't fall over a black negative space and now you've got a black-and-white Picasso, except nobody'll give you any money for it. If you plan your negative space in the layout phase, you can avoid these nasty problems.

## TAKINGIT UPANOTCH

Once you understand all the pitfalls of negative space, you can design more complicated compositions. In this drawing, I've gone a step further by spotting grays using parallel lines as a gray tone. Notice how an invisible line is created where the gray tone on her cheek shows the tip of her finger.

## PRO TIPS

### UNDERGROUND ART

"The subway in New York City is the most inspiring place to work. I laid out my issues on the N train for years."

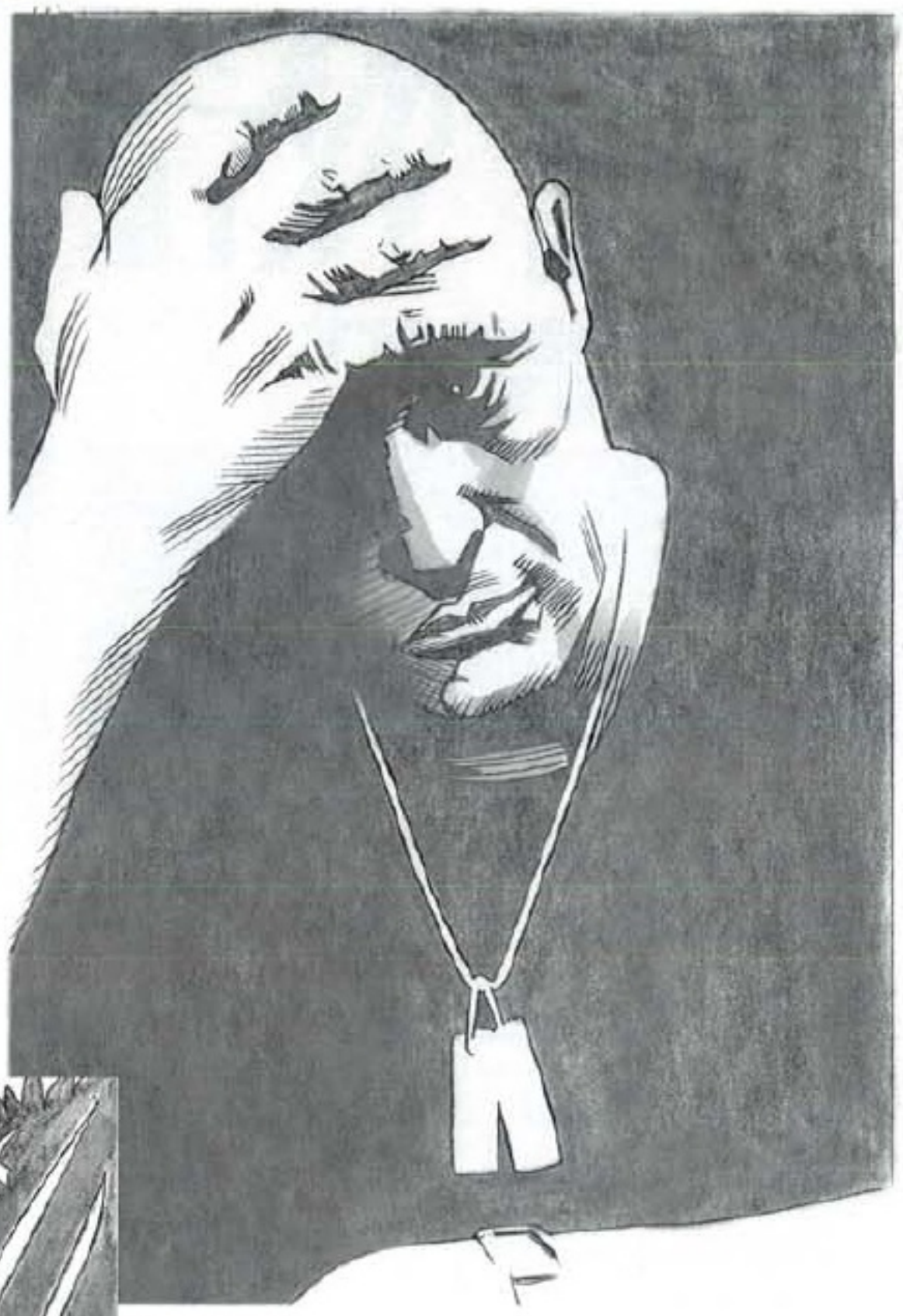
—Alex Maleev, *Daredevil*

# NEGATIVESPACE

## CHIAROSCURO,BABY

The renaissance masters developed the powerful technique of chiaroscuro in the 14th century to give their paintings realism, mood and atmosphere, and it worked out okay, I guess, if you go for that Rembrandt junk... The basic term referred to an artist using light and shade to depict a three-dimensional space. Today the concept lives on under many different names in art and film, but the idea remains the same. In comics, the guys from Gaijin studios have done a lot of great work using these concepts, and, of course, *Hellboy* is an awesome example of the mood that can be conjured with light and dark.

A great example of film chiaroscuro is the ending scenes of "Apocalypse Now," where there is a whacked-out meeting between Marlon Brando and Martin Sheen. Their faces are half-hidden in shadow, and the light and darkness seem to mimic the struggle of the characters against each other. The lighting and the overall approach to this film really made an impression on me and changed the way I approach art. I remember drawing panels of my comic book characters with the exact lighting from the movie.

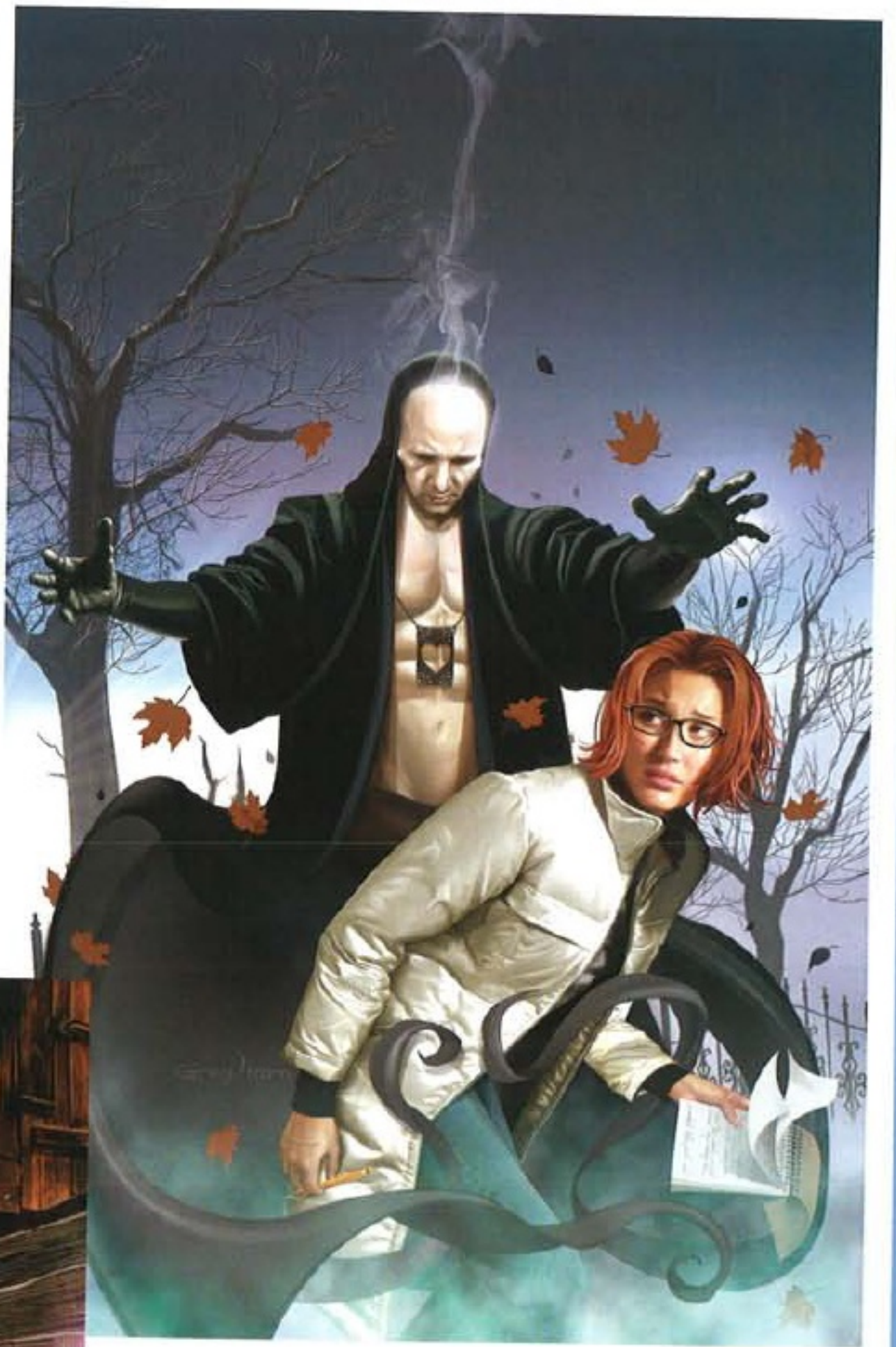


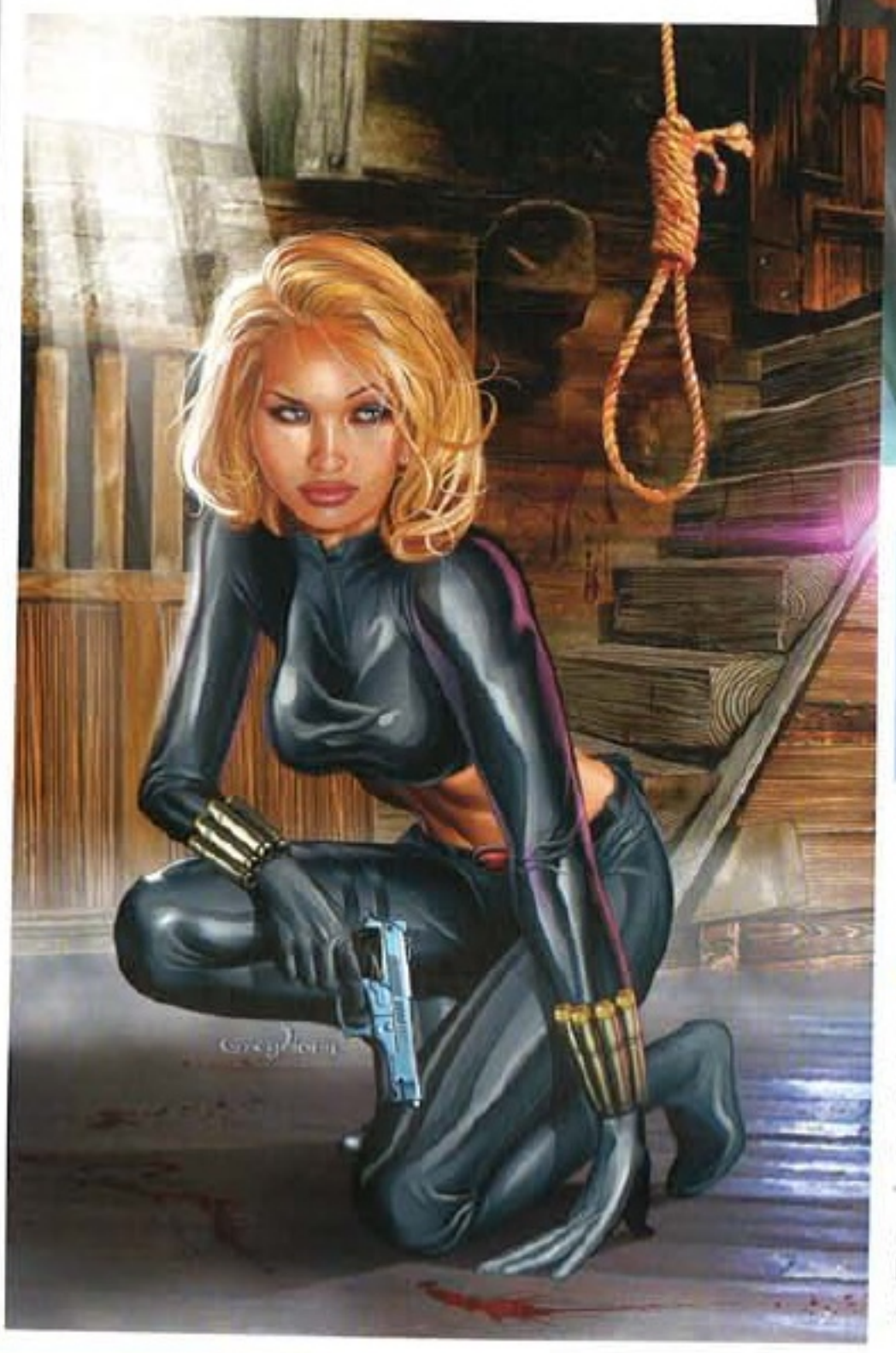
## SOURCESOFBLACK

To me chiaroscuro is a state of mind at all phases of the artwork. Even in the most basic layouts, I'm thinking about where the light sources will be and how the shadows are going to affect the scene's coherency. At the same time, I consider the placement of dark and bright objects and silhouettes. For instance, the picture to the left of Wolverine obviously has black areas representing shadows, but there are also other black areas representing a silhouette (the tree leaves) and another black area representing a dark-colored object (his head gear). There are many different sources of black, and all of them must be taken into account for the design to work.

# USINGTHESECONCEPTSINCOLOR

All the concepts dicussed over the preceeding pages can be translated directly from black and white to full-color paintings. To the right is Kat Farrell and the Judge from *Deadline*. First, I used the ideas of chiaroscuro in this painting by planning for the darker areas to fall next to light areas. This attention to the design allowed me to cover the bottom third of the scene in fog and still retain clarity of the image. The spotting of black areas lent the scene some strength and legibility—note how the black cuffs of Kat's sweater helped me separate her hands from the jacket and her white note pad was planned beforehand to fall over a black area for contrast. As for the negative space, it was designed to be mostly white to mid-tone around the Judge (whose edges are mostly black) and darker where the fog covers. All of these things allowed me to make a clearly defined painting with minimal outline work or invisible lines.





The *Black Widow* #1 cover is designed using the same principles, except I put more emphasis on highlighting since her outfit is dark and the background is also dark. My other alternative was to brighten the negative space around her, but that might have ruined the mood of the scene.

**WELL,** that was fun. I work solely as a painter these days, and it is always enjoyable to go back to my penciling roots for a time. I feel very fortunate for all the basics I learned through penciling. Without the skills I learned in black and white, my painting skills would have never developed to be what they are today!

*Greg Horn's work can be found on the covers of Marvel's* Emma Frost *and* Mystique, *and be sure to check out his book from Image Comics,* The Art of Greg Horn.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: PART 13

# SILHOUETTES BY EDUARDO RISSO

Silhouettes are legitimate tools when you're creating a comic book. For those about to start drawing, it's important first and foremost to do a good job working on the character or thing the silhouette will represent *before* actually transforming it into a silhouette. This may sound naive, but I have seen many artists make this same huge mistake—drawing the outline of a figure without knowing what was originally going to be there in the first place—and so they fail in the end.

When I first started to draw I thought that silhouettes had a limited use; however, as time went by, I soon discovered that I could break those limits.

## LIFESAVER

I began using silhouettes when publishing deadlines started to overwhelm me, and I was running out of time. I didn't want the quality of the work to decay, so I needed to use silhouettes as black spots to achieve an established feel, but without abusing them too much. Knowing that the majority of the readers love and appreciate the details in the drawings, I had to sharpen my wits if I was going to scale them back. **Figures A** and **B** show how silhouettes bring the panel to life without sacrificing too much detail.

**FIGURE A**

**FIGURE B**

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FIGURE C

# NIGHTANDDAY

The correct use of silhouettes can help in many situations; for example, in an already established night shot (**Figure C**). They're fast to do, and night shots aren't too detailed to begin with. Also, silhouette panels don't confuse or distract the readers when they're following a sequence. With good composition and proper lighting, a dark silhouette panel can solve your problems and deliver the right message.

But it isn't always nighttime in comic books. In daytime scenes, things get more complicated. But then again, what is the sun if not a powerful light source? In strong daylight, anything and everything casts shadows! In **Figure D**, for example, I can play with silhouettes in total daylight, dropping some kind of solid shade on some characters. Here, the characters are in silhouette because of a shadow cast on them by buildings which line the street that they're crossing. In this way, I can make the readers pay attention to important story elements.

# PRO TIPS

## EGO TRIPPING

"Put your ego in check. Try to be realistic about yourself: You're not as good as you think you are—but nobody ever is. I've been in the business for 20 years and I still have things to learn."—Mark Bagley, *Ultimate Spider-Man*

FIGURE D

# SILHOUETTES

## FRAMEJOB

Something that always worries me is how to accurately separate the background from the foreground. If you can find the right frame, I think you can obtain satisfactory results from silhouettes. You can also make facial gestures stronger through silhouetting. Take a look at **Figure E**. Again taking advantage of the shadows of buildings falling on the characters, I've covered the secondary character with them. I'm not concerned about this character, except for his changing facial expressions in the final outcome of the sequence. Meanwhile, I could have chosen to silhouette the main character and the result would not have changed all that much, but I wanted to emphasize his innocent attitude. Leaving him visible while placing the secondary character in silhouette was the way to go.

## NEGATIVITY

**Figure F** is a good choice for a negative silhouette, because it enables you to show restraint. In this panel, silhouettes allowed me to enter inside the dark atmosphere where the action was happening, developing an alternative way to compose the frame. I was able to emphasize the characteristics of the character in the background without losing the sexy movements of the one in the foreground.

Remember, you want to use silhouettes like this in a moment where it's relevant to what's going on in the story. It's possible to play with certain details that suggest things more than showing them, without losing the focus of what really matters inside the panel. One can fall in the temptation to just change the color of the silhouette.

## THEBIGPICTURE

The constant search to make my work the best it can be eventually led me to the massive use of silhouettes in the same panel (**Figure G**). At the right moment in the story (as always!), I discovered that using all of these silhouettes could heighten the impact of the main character without losing their personalities. Just remember, readers still have to be able to recognize the individual characters within the mass of silhouettes; you can do this through a good choice of clothes, color of hair, accessories from daily life, etc. These kinds of things also help separate one plane of the drawing from another.

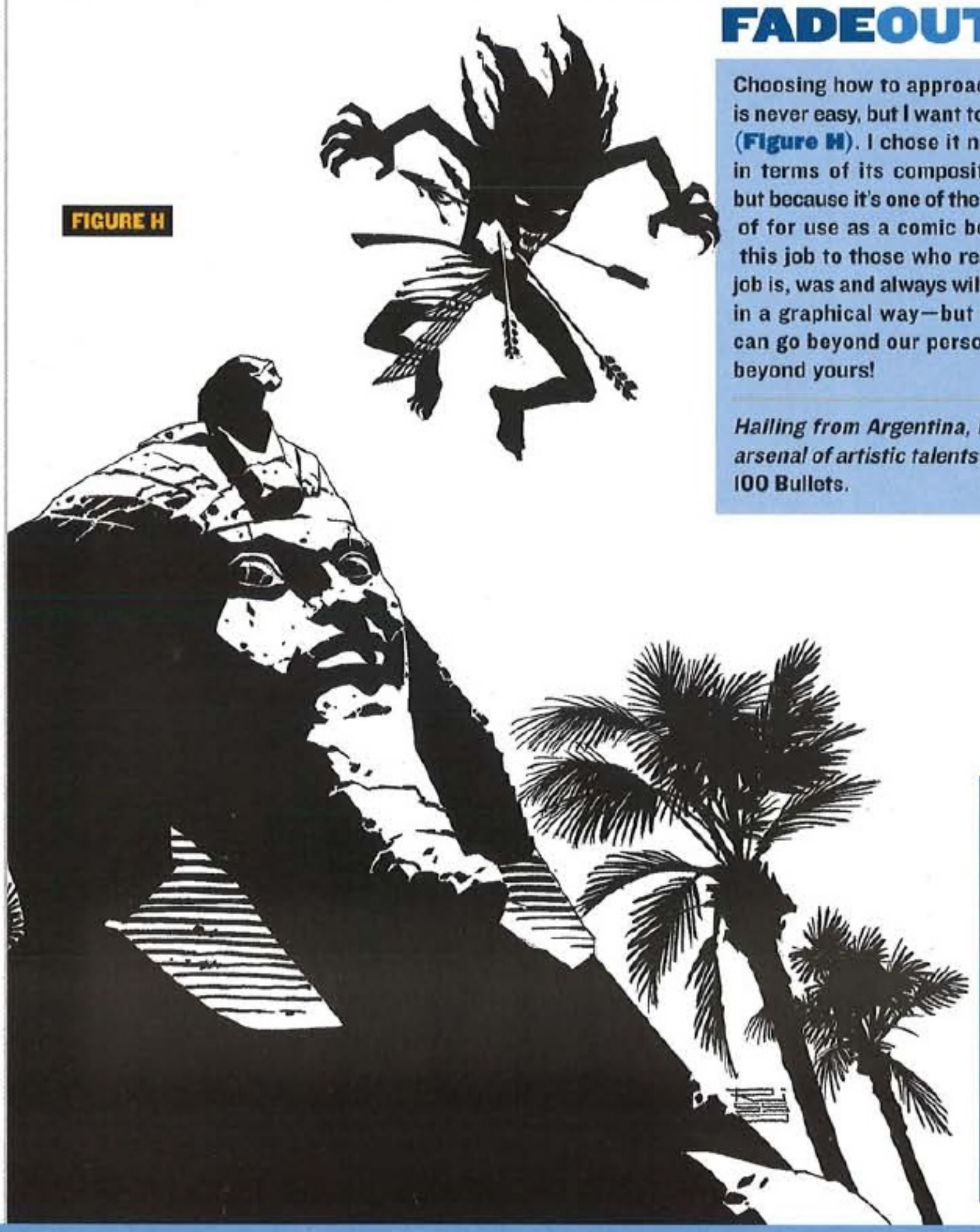
**FIGURE G**

## FADEOUT

Choosing how to approach a drawing, panel or page is never easy, but I want to leave you with this example (**Figure H**). I chose it not just as a matter of taste in terms of its composition and use of silhouette, but because it's one of the few illustrations I conceived of for use as a comic book cover. Normally I leave this job to those who really know how to do it—my job is, was and always will be trying to narrate stories in a graphical way—but this shows that each of us can go beyond our personal limits. Good luck going beyond yours!

*Hailing from Argentina, Eduardo Risso uses his full arsenal of artistic talents in the pages of DC/Vertigo's* **100 Bullets**.

**FIGURE H**



## PRO TIPS

### FESS UP

"Don't pass the buck to anyone. I hear horror stories all the time about guys lying about when they can get something done, then failing; it simply closes the editor's door to them. Be honest and take your lumps if need be, but let people know your word means something." —John Cassaday, *Astonishing X-Men*

# MOOD

BY KELLEY JONES

First off, let me say that this little ditty on how to draw horror is simply my own personal way. By no means is this the *only way*. In this column, I'll be emphasizing ideas more than techniques, because that's what horror really is. It's all one big mind game. Don't worry, though—I'll tell you as clearly as I can how to achieve the maximum impact of these ideas in your drawings. As for any prerequisites to successfully establishing a mood in your pieces, I highly recommend taking a number of film appreciation courses. Films and comics are very similar in their frame-to-frame storytelling. These courses will not only teach you about foreshadowing, foreground and other technical aspects, but they'll teach you about how to really look at your work. Okay, that's my little pep talk—now dim the lights and cue the spooky music!

## DARK STORYTELLING

To begin, I loosely sketched out my ideas with a soft blue watercolor pencil. In this example, I haven't erased the unnecessary lines, because I want you to see the construction and the choices I made towards completion.

Now, a horror picture should suggest a story in order to properly attract its viewer. Silhouettes and strong lighting help me guide the viewer to look at the parts of the picture that will do this.

I find that the best results are achieved when I look at something and ask either What happened?" or "What *will* happen?" Here in this picture, I'm trying to cause revulsion at what occurred as well as tension for what will soon follow.

## PRO TIPS

### OUTFIT ADVICE

"Look at yourself in the mirror. What do your clothes say about your attitude, job, friends? Clothes can speak for a character more than the characters themselves do." —Rags Morales, *Identity Crisis*

## INK, THEREFORE I AM

Inking this, I only used a No. 3 watercolor brush. You should try inking without worrying too much about any goofs. Staying loose will help you make fewer errors. So attack the pencils and feel free to move the paper around. This lets you "see" the build-up of the line and decide where to place the black areas.

To make the picture atmospheric, I'll use different textures. To do this, I use shorter, thinner strokes on the tree bark, and longer, more rounded strokes on the stones. On the shadow, I try and keep the edges clean so the viewer can tell what the object is.

## MOON OVER MINE ENEMY

To emphasize the goblin and add more atmosphere, I added the moon. Rather than draw it, I placed a sheet of tracing paper over the entire picture and taped it into place. I then cut away everywhere the sky was. To achieve the air-brush effect, I used an old toothbrush and applied the ink to the toothbrush with the watercolor brush. About two or three dips on it should do. Then I pulled back on the bristles with my thumb and let 'em snap back. Do this a few inches away from where you want the spray effect and feel free to do it a few times in areas you want darker. To make the moon appear brighter, I didn't outline it in ink. This makes it recede into the background and frame the goblin, as well as make the shadows darker.

## GET THE WHITE OUT

The final stage is where you want to use white-out. Not only can it clean up your mistakes, but white-out can actually add to you drawing. Notice how the rocks are more rounded out and the roots extend more deeply into the black.

And that's it. See how horror isn't just blood and gore? Through lighting and silhouettes, I can suggest the action. This, to me, is much more effective, because the viewer can use his imagination to fill in the nasty bits better than I could draw them.

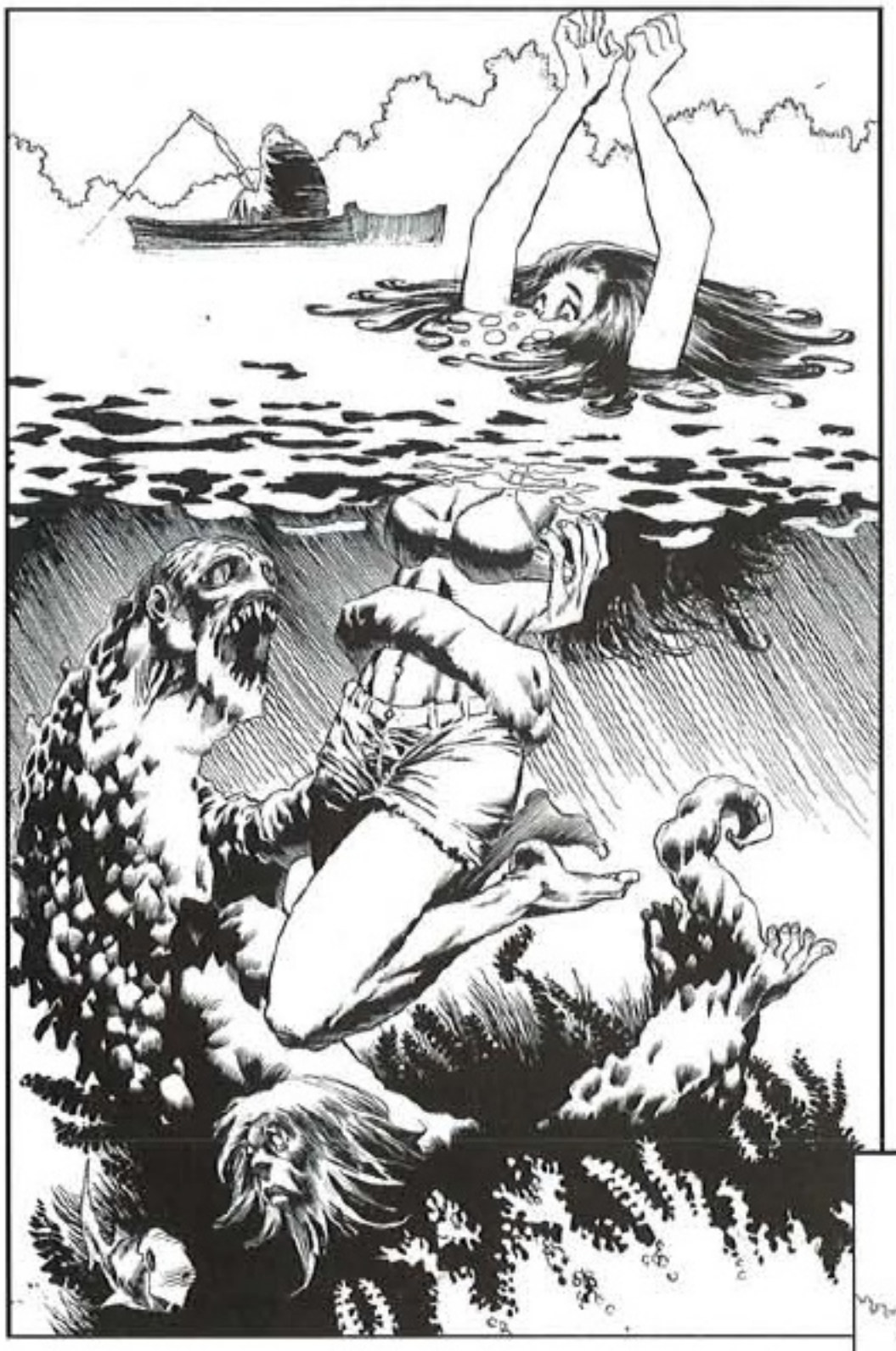
## CONFIDENCE GAME

In this sketch, I only partially inked the areas that I'm drawing. You don't always have to pencil every detail if you are going to ink it. This helps to add vitality to the drawing as well as give you confidence in your skills. I also find it fun to do because all kinds of "good" accidents can occur. For example, in this piece, the way the hair curls on top of the water wasn't in the pencils.

## BRUSHWITHEVIL

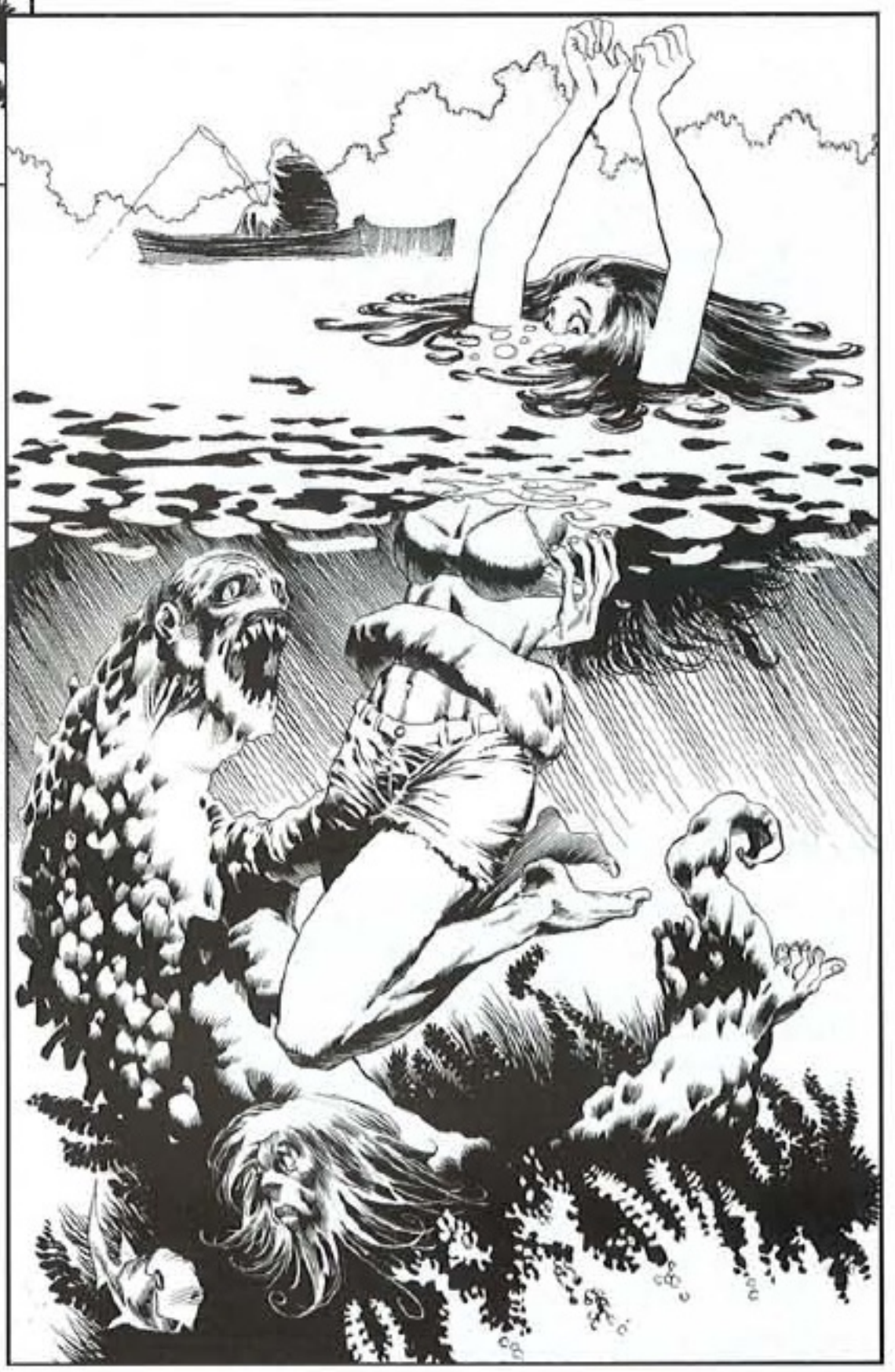
All of this inking is done with a brush. This helps get across the current and buoyancy of the water. I always try to do my brush work first, because that keeps the drawing fresh and exciting.

On the monster, I emphasized its feet and hand by using as little rendering as possible; I barely outlined them. The monster itself will seem creepier with human appendages, and the decapitated head anchors the bottom of the picture while hinting at the girl's possible fate.



## INKINGTO CROWABOUT

All of the inking at this stage was done with a crowquill pen point. You can find them where calligraphy pens are housed at art stores. They're more flexible than a rapidograph pen (which is normally used for drawing straight-edge technical things like buildings and machines), so they take a little more time to learn how to use. They're good for things like the bubbles and wave outlines, because they keep a consistent line thickness. And on the lines leading up to the surface, the pen will "give" a little, so it blends together like a brush.



## TWOTREATSINONE

Using a little white-out on the surface waves and the decapitated head's hair helps to give some definition to both.

This drawing's main interest is that it's two pictures in one. If you cover the top of it and just view the underwater scene, it alone makes an interesting picture. Yet the scene above, with the girl's eyes, lets you know something's not right, even if you don't see why. And the fisherman not responding lets you know it's silent action, which is even spookier.

**WELL, HOPEFULLY,** this column has helped to (pardon me) get you in the mood. Anyway, the best advice I can give you is to discipline yourself to sit in a chair and just draw for hours a day. Once you accept the fact that your drawing won't be perfect, you can stop wasting time worrying about it. Also try drawing things you don't like, so you won't be afraid to draw them. When you get those things down, you'll find your time will be much more horribly productive.

*Kelley Jones has plumbed the depths of horror in books like DC's* Batman/Dracula *and IDW's* Cal McDonald.

# EVOLUTION OF A PAGE

BY TOM RANEY AND SCOTT HANNA

Okay, you've got a plot and a blank sheet of paper. How do you turn this into a piece of black-and-white artwork ready for reproduction? Tom Raney and I will show you our respective step-by-step processes of penciling and inking an actual page from *Thor* #50. Besides *Thor*, we've worked together on books like *X-Men*, *Ultimate X-Men* and *Uncanny X-Men*. As in many comics, the end product is the result of a group effort. Here's how our part is done. Take it away, Tom!

When I get Dan Jurgens' plot for *Thor*, I read it through, noting my general impressions of what's going on in the issue. I try to get a sense of pacing for the whole book. But we're only dealing with a single page, a single image in fact! So let's get started!

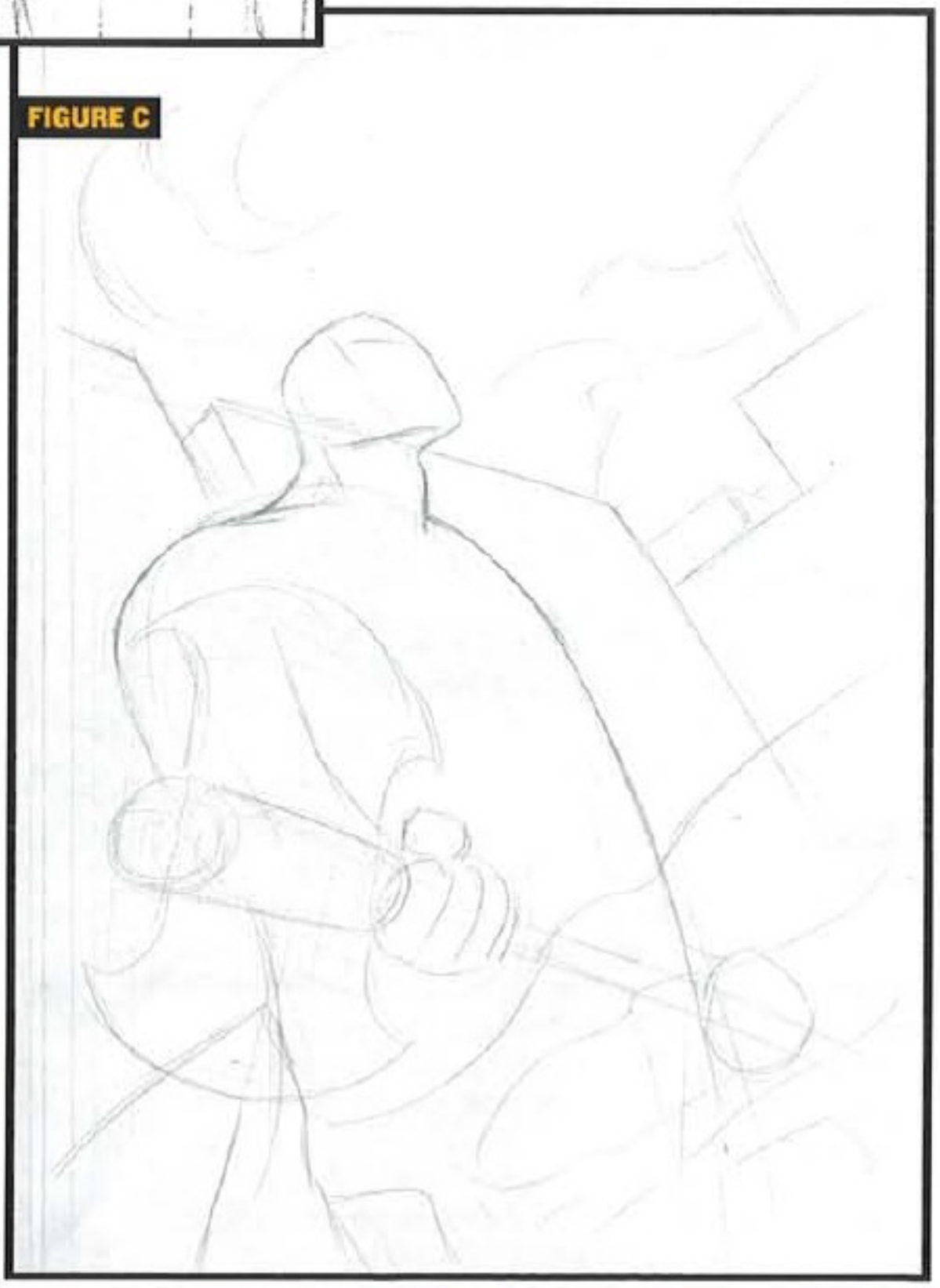
## THUMBNAILS

One of the most important parts of the job! Here I decide what needs to be included on the page to get the story across clearly. Composition is planned out at this stage. These thumbnails **(Figures A & B)** are actual size. I like to work very small; if it's clearly legible at this scale, it will be in print. Dan was looking for a powerful upshot of Thor with the buildings of New York behind him as well as storm clouds gathering above. My first attempt included everything needed to tell the story, but I felt that it needed more of a left-to-right flow. Since we read left to right, your eye naturally seeks out that kind of movement. It creates a more comfortable, immediate image.

FIGURE A

FIGURE B

FIGURE C



## LAYOUTS

Now on to the actual page **(Figure C)**. Layouts are where I place all of my basic shapes. At this point I'm thinking about proportion and general structure. No detail here! It's easy to get caught up in small sections of the page that are fun to draw, but it's crucial to plan everything out at the beginning. Poor planning quite often results in massive redrawing and lots of erasing! A quick note about tools: I use a mechanical drafting pencil (2h lead), magic rub and electric erasers, and an assortment of ruling triangles and circle templates.

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## ROUGHINGITIN

"Keep it loose" is the name of the game here (**Figure D**)! I lay in my basic anatomy, start to lay out costuming and, while not pictured here, I lay in my perspective grid. I try to keep my pencil lines very light because almost none of them will end up on the final page.

FIGURE D

## CLEANLINE

Here I finalize my linework (**Figure E**). I hunt through the rough lines from the previous step and choose the single lines that I like, making sure that costuming, props (like Thor's hammer) and environment are all designed and on the page. For me, this is the most time-consuming part of the job. By placing all of my exterior linework first, I eliminate the need to backtrack. Mistakes are the bane of the deadline!

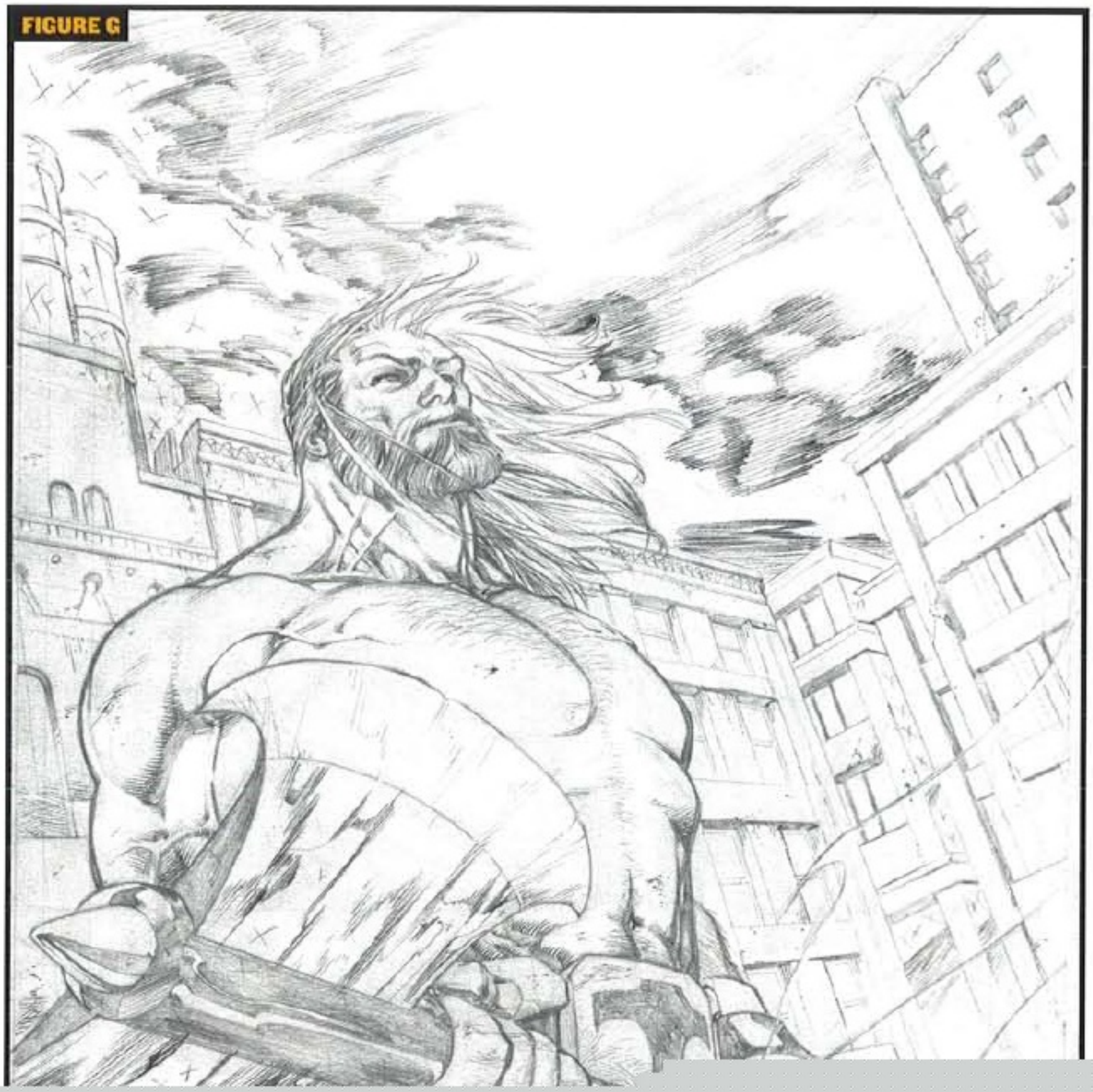
FIGURE E

## SPOTTING BLACKS

Black adds weight to a page. It helps direct the eye and establishes mood, so always try to establish a sense of balance. I wanted this image to feel very grounded; placing large bodies of solid black at the bottom gives the impression of "solidity," while breaking up the black areas at the top helps it to feel lighter (**Figure F**). Also, placing black around the openness of Thor's face helps draw the eye there.

FIGURE F

FIGURE G



CAN'T FIND REFERENCE FOR A FACIAL EXPRESSION? USE A MIRROR.

**PAGE 2-**

**1-** Over Mary's shoulder- Peter waves his hands like an umpire.
**PETER**
And- and you- you can't tell anyone-
I mean... anyone.

**2-** Same as 3, last page.
**MARY JANE**
Okay.

**3-** Same as one, but tighter. Peter getting a read on if she is getting it.
**PETER**
Ever.
Ev- er!

**4-** Same as 2.
**MARY JANE**
Okay.

**5-** Same as 3, but tighter.
**PETER**
You gotta promise me.

**6-** Same as 2.
**MARY JANE**
I promise.

**7-** Same as 5, but tighter.
**PETER**
I mean it, you've got to promise me.

**8-** Same angle as 2, but Mary is getting annoyed.
**MARY JANE**
Peter...

**9-** Peter backs off.
**PETER**
Okay.

**BENDIS:** "I knew that Mark had been vastly underused as a pencil talent, and that he could absolutely pull off this issue, which is all acting. He takes his faces and his acting of his characters very seriously, probably the most important thing he's added to his repertoire. Quite often I'd be yanking off word balloons from the pages, because the face said it all, or more. That's the biggest compliment I can give to an artist, that I don't think my dialogue is necessary. With this issue, the first draft may have been longer as far as the talky-talky, but you just look at Mary Jane's beaming face, and what else is there to say? I did fall very much in love with Bagley during the process of making this issue."

**BAGLEY:** "Yeah, we're getting married, actually. I love little bald Jewish men. [*Laughs*] Actually, I've never been a big fan of my faces. They've been too cartoony, and I'm trying to make them less cartoony as I go along. You look at this stuff versus the stuff I'm drawing now, and I think there's an improvement on the structuring of faces, and the eyes are maybe smaller and less cartoony. Right now, to me, the conversation scenes that I get to draw with Brian's stuff are the most fulfilling."

**BENDIS:** "Pay attention to the one-person shots and two-person shots. The one-shot is when they're not on the same page mentally, or they're thinking different things; the two-shot is when they're very much on the same page. That's something I learned from the movies. There's a subliminal thing the audience is being told, that when there's a two-shot, there's a connection, especially after a series of single-shots like on the previous page. It's a very intimate story, so you tend to really hang on those faces."

**BAGLEY:** "I have a whole file of photographs of faces from all different angles, from different fashion magazines to local magazines to Newsweek. Sometimes, on a larger face, I'll take that to a light table and, while I won't trace it, I'll basically structure the face from that photograph. I try to be very subtle about it and just use it to make sure the eyes get in the right place, the nose gets in the right angle. Then I just go in and I draw. With a lot of artists, when they use photo reference, you look at the face and you can tell it's a photograph. It can take you out of the story, so I try really hard not to do that."

**PAGE 3-**

**1-** Peter just stares at her. The words can't even form.

**2-** Mary waits. She looks a little flushed. Excited. We can see she thinks this is going to be Peter's professing his crush on her.

**3-** Peter stares at her. His mouth open as if he is about to talk but he isn't.

**4-** Same as 2.
**MARY JANE**
Peter...

**5-** Same as 3.
**PETER**
I'm Spider-Man.

**6-** Mary thought she was going to hear: 'I like you.' So this takes a second to process.

ONE OF THE TOUGHEST SKILLS TO MASTER? MAKING CHARACTERS LOOK CONSISTENT FROM PANEL TO PANEL. PAY ATTENTION TO THE SHAPE OF YOUR CHARACTERS' HEADS, THE SHAPES OF THEIR MOUTHS, THEIR HAIR STYLES AND HOW FAR APART THEIR EYES ARE.

# SAMPLESCRIPTS

**BENDIS:** "I do call for repeating the exact same panels sometimes, 'cause there's a lot of back and forth, and there's kind of a timing issue involved. But the fact that Mark will redraw each panel slightly differently rather than statting [photocopying] them does bring a vitality to it. It's funny: [*Powers* artist] Mike Oeming won't stat any more. [*Alias* artist] Michael Gaydos did it, and I liked when Gaydos did it. And [*Daredevil* artist] Alex Maleev does it, but Alex always redesigns the panels. There's no right way or wrong way to make a comic book page."

**BAGLEY:** "Talking-heads pages can present a challenge, because I try not to do the cheat where you use the same image, even in the script in places where Brian calls for it, like, 'PANEL FIVE: Same as 3.' I really try and break it up visually, so even in a conversation you come in and out of the page. Visually, it makes it more dramatic. If you go through this issue, there are places where it calls for repeat panels, and while I do this a couple of times, mostly I sort of give him what he wants—but not exactly. Brian trusts my storytelling enough to go, 'Okay, this works.' Sometimes it's as effective, or better, than what he calls for. In fact, in 76 issues I think he's had me redraw only three things. Seriously."

**PAGE 4-**

**1**- Tight two shot. Profile. Peter shushing a confused Mary.

**MARY JANE**
What?
What did you just-?

**PETER**
SSSHH...

**MARY JANE**
What?!

**2**- Peter whispering. His finger gently to his mouth as he talks and looks over his shoulder to the closed bedroom door.

**PETER**
I'm Spider-Man.

**3**- Mary just looks at him. Slightly confused.

**MARY JANE**
You're Spider-Man?

**4**- Peter still shushing her.

**PETER**
Yes.

**5**- Same as 3.

**MARY JANE**
The super-hero?

**6**- Same as 4.

**PETER**
Yes.

**7**- Mary furrows her brow slightly. She thinks. Still processing.

HAVING TROUBLE LAYING OUT A SCENE? WATCH A MOVIE WHERE A SIMILAR SITUATION PLAYS OUT TO HELP GET A HANDLE ON IT.

**Page 5-**

**1**- Over Peter's shoulder. Mary bursts out laughing. A big laugh. A big wide-eyed Julia Roberts infectious laugh.

**MARY JANE**
Ha ha ah ahhahahahah
Oh man... hahahah

**2**- Peter rolls his eyes.

**MARY JANE (CONT'D)**
Hahahahahahaa whoops...
SPX: klump

**3**- Mary pushes at his chest- teasing. Two shot.

**MARY JANE (CONT'D)**
Shut up.

**PETER**
I am.

**MARY JANE**
Stop it.
You are such a goofball.

**PETER**
Whisper.

**MARY JANE**
You stop.

**4**- Peter rolls his eyes to the air, with a look that says: I knew I was going to have to do this...

**PETER**
I knew I was going to have to do this.

**MARY JANE**
Stop it.

**BENDIS:** "This issue is in fact a one-act play. It all takes place in one very small room, and it's all acting, and I knew Mark could do it. I paid very close attention to that when I was writing. This is all I think about all day. I steal every [film director Martin] Scorsese trick I can think of. I read *American Cinematographer* like a lunatic, and there's just tons of storytelling tricks in there that are easily applied to a comic panel. I've studied stuff like this like a mental patient. And I appreciate Mark, because I've learned a lot from him about an economy of style—the simple elegance of telling a good superhero story."

**BAGLEY:** "When I started in the business, I was working off of plots, and over the last 10 years it's shifted into full scripts. It's made my job easier in one sense because I don't have to pace the entire book— it's sort of paced out for me. It's also restricted what I do a little bit, because you have to respect what the writer does. But on the other hand, the writer's got to respect the fact that it's a visual medium, and the visual part of it is my job. And if you've got a writer that respects what you do and you respect what he does it works out really well. And with Brian, I've had that type of relationship."

**PAGE 6-**

**1-** Big panel. Mary in the foreground- her back to us watches Peter, in his socks, as he hops up onto the wall of his bedroom in a graceful leap.

He hops right onto his poster of Einstein's face.
Big silent panels of Peter doing this should be awe-inspiring. A moment both epic and intimate. No one has ever seen this before. A teenage boy hopping up on a wall.

This is a big unique moment for a super-hero comic book. And each image should pop in the memory.

**2-** Big panel. Mary's p.o.v.
Peter sticks to the wall with both feet and one hand. Gesturing a 'ta daa' with the other.

**3-** Birds eye. Tight looking down on Mary as she looks up at us. She just stares blankly- wide eyed. It is still taking a moment to register.

**BENDIS:** "Bagley and I have a very good relationship. I know very well what he wants, what his goals are, what excites him, what intrigues him. We have a good shorthand together. I have a tendency to cut action scenes up into panels of single actions, and he's able to take it and go, 'F--- it, you could do both things in one panel.' I came from independent comics with my hoity-toity jibber-jabber, and he came from the most mainstream of mainstream, workmanlike comics. He'd mainstream me up and I'd indie him down, and right in the middle you have a good comic book."

**BAGLEY:** "This was such a visual moment, and I try to make more of an impact with the important, significant parts of the page. I didn't want to do a basic five- or six-panel grid, because the one panel where's he's flipping up onto the ceiling is a very vertical-type idea. It worked pretty well, though I could've used another panel in between the two and had him flipping onto his hands, because it's a little confusing as to what he's doing. Actually, the idea of her getting a little vertigo from what he's doing is something we could've incorporated into it—like, 'Whoa!' But hey, nobody's perfect. I think Brian's come to understand that I'm not the best artist in the world, but I'm a pretty good storyteller. And it's all part of the storytelling."

WHEN DOES THE ARTIST'S JOB STOP? IT DOESN'T. EVEN IF THE SCRIPT ISN'T MICRO-DETAIL, GIVE THE READER AN IMMEDIATE FEEL FOR WHO THE CHARACTERS ARE WITH SUBTLE NUANCES. WHILE MANY TEENAGERS HAVE T & A POSTERS ON THEIR WALL, MAYBE THE BRAINY TYPE WOULD OPT FOR AN EINSTEIN POSTER INSTEAD.

HOW DO YOU MAKE THE OUTLANDISH SEEM EVEN MORE SURREAL? GROUND EVERYTHING ELSE IN THE PANEL IN EVERYDAY LIFE.

**BENDIS:** "This is a huge moment. The story's from Peter's point of view, and as soon as he hits the wall it switches to being from Mary's point of view. And from Mary's point of view, it's a humungous moment when your boyfriend sticks to the wall. [*Laughs*] You've got to treat that like it's the biggest thing ever, 'cause it is. It's a shockarooni. Keep in mind that at this point in *Ultimate Spider-Man*, there were no superheroes, so it's doubly crazy."

**BAGLEY:** "I really think I wanted a money shot here. I really wanted that visual impact—BAM! He's stuck to the wall! Right on this poster of a really bad rendition of Einstein [*Laughs*]. At this point I still wasn't getting what Brian was doing, so I was sort of trying to push a visual impact on it. This page is also one of the few times that I did repeat MJ's face exactly from one panel to the next. I put three reaction panels at the end of the page that I think work really well, though Brian may not have called for them."

**PAGE 7-**

**1-** Tight on Peter- gently smiling from his perch on the wall. He is trying to get a read on her reaction.

**2-** Mary looks around the room to see what the goof is.

**3-** Wide of room. Peter flips over backwards and hops on to the ceiling right above Mary's head.

**4-** Bird's eye tight on Mary calmly looking up at this.

**5-** Peter upside-down. His hair hanging.

**PETER**
You okay?

# SAMPLESCRIPTS

## SAMPLE ACTION SCENE

**THE SCRIPT:** *The New Avengers* #2, scene five

**THE SETUP:** Heroes Luke Cage, Matt Murdock (Daredevil), Jessica Drew (Spider-Woman), Captain America and Spider-Man battle against Mr. Hyde, Carnage and the other escaped inmates of the maximum-security superhuman prison, the Raft.

**BENDIS:** "I definitely had a tone and feel for this scene that's well documented in the script, and I knew would push Finch and [colorist] Frank D'Armata, who's a big, big part of the final result of that issue. It's claustrophobic, it's a disaster, it's the biggest supervillain blowout ever. It's a mosh pit of supervillains, a pure melee. So to choreograph that and give that feeling, you're gonna have to really trust your artist. I mean, I could write it—I could have someone say, 'Oh my God, this is such a crazy melee!'—but you really have to show it. It's a show scene, not a tell scene. And this bottom-level fight is really like a horror movie. The lights are off—it's *Resident Evil* with supervillains."

**FINCH:** "Bendis makes it very easy, because everything was in there. He never gives you anything contradictory or impossible to draw, which I've run into before. I try to just think in terms of a foreground, a middleground, and a background, and decide what's the most dominant element—what panel on the page I want to be the biggest and the most dominant, and what's the focal point within each panel."

**NEW AVENGERS SCRIPT • ISSUE TWO**
**By Brian Michael Bendis**

**PAGE 1-**

**1-** Int. Raft lower level corridor- Same
Matt barely dodges Mr. Hyde's fist. Matt's clothes are pulling off in the bloody, dirty fight.
Mr. Hyde's fist crashes into the wall sending stone debris with it.
In the background, Jessica Drew blasts Carnage in the back of the head with a sparking blast as Luke Cage struggles with Carnage's all-consuming attack.
**MISTER HYDE**
You put me here, Murdock!!
**SPX:** spash
**MATT MURDOCK**
Actually, Zabo, you put you here...
... but I see that you might not be in the mindset to see it that way!

**2-** Luke Cage is being smothered by Carnage. He is pulling on Carnage's tongue and doing everything he can to keep Carnage from getting near Jessica and the others.
**LUKE CAGE**
I don't even know what this is I'm fighting.
**JESSICA DREW**
It's Carnage! It's one of Spider-Man's.
**LUKE CAGE**
Well, then get him down here!
**CARNAGE**
I would love that! But you first!

**3-** Matt high kicks Mister Hyde in the chin. Using the wall to push his entire body in Hyde's face.
Hyde's head crashes into the wall. The size of the hall in Matt's favor.
**SPX:** crack

**4-** Jessica grabs into Carnage from behind and shoots a venom blast right into its mouth before it can bite on Luke Cage's head.
Cage and Drew together can only hold it still; they cannot win.
She is yelling to the lone S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent who is crouched down at the dead body of his fellow agents.
**JESSICA DREW**
Guys, we still don't even know what happened!
There's 87 convicted felons in this prison we have to get out of here and call for...

**5-** Tight on Jessica. She sees it first. Her mussed hair over one eye. She is shocked and relieved.
**JESSICA DREW**
Reinforcements...
**SPX:** krafoom

**PAGE 2-**

**1-** Big panel! The Sentry stands there. Crackling with golden energy. The hero has returned.
The room feels different with him in it. Everyone stops fighting and stares at this golden god.
The Sentry's face blank, almost shamed. He stands in front of his now broken cell door.

**2-** The Sentry's p.o.v. Everyone is stunned. Mid fight everyone turns and looks. Even Carnage takes a second.

**3-** From over Sentry's shoulder, Carnage tosses Luke Cage and Jessica aside and violently attacks the Sentry.

**4-** With stunning calm Sentry catches the tentacle that was about to attack him.
Like Keanu at the end of the first "Matrix." This is no threat to him.

**BENDIS:** "It's kind of like a gut instinct, but I had a feeling that Finch would draw an amazing Carnage. I just kind of saw it. 'Cause when I'm writing I really try to get into the head of the artist, and try to imagine what the art would look like, and what could he do that would really kick ass even if he's never done it before. When I got to the page where Carnage first appeared, it was almost exactly what was in my head, but with better lighting. I was feeling really good about what we accomplished here."

**FINCH:** "I learned a lot about how to spot blacks from working with Marc Silvestri, and from looking at Mike Mignola and Eduardo Risso and Frank Frazetta. I always try and layer my blacks so it doesn't get too muddy. I like the scenes to be really dark, but I find that you can't have a dark overlapping a light. So with blacks, you can layer really deep into a panel without getting muddy. It keeps it separated. Stuff still gets lost, but I think it helps for me anyway. I really like anatomy and shadows and all that stuff, so it makes scenes like this one pretty easy, or enjoyable, anyway."

**PAGE 3-**

**1-** Very small panel. Boom! A smashing and a sound effect that we will reveal is the Sentry smashing through an entire floor of the Raft.
This is the Sentry taking Carnage out of the premises by flying straight up.
**SPX** : boom!

**2-** Very small panel. Boom! A smashing and a sound effect that we will reveal is the Sentry smashing through another entire floor of the Raft.
**SPX** : boom!

**3-** Very small panel. Boom! A smashing and a sound effect that we will reveal is the Sentry smashing through another entire floor of the Raft.
**SPX** : boom!

**4-** Very small panel. Boom! A smashing and a sound effect that we will reveal is the Sentry smashing through another entire floor of the Raft.
**SPX** : boom!

**5-** Very small panel. Boom! A smashing and a sound effect that we will reveal is the Sentry smashing through another entire floor of the Raft.
**SPX** : boom!

**6-** Very small panel. Boom! A smashing and a sound effect that we will reveal is the Sentry smashing through another entire floor of the Raft.
**SPX** : boom!

**7-** Very small panel. Boom! A smashing and a sound effect that we will reveal is the Sentry smashing through another entire floor of the Raft.
**SPX** : boom!

**8-** Ext. Raft main floor- Same
Captain America is wildly fighting the crowd of supervillains. He is a born war time soldier. He knows how to use the crowd to his advantage.
Spider-Man in reeling in pain. His arm broken. He is thwipping web into the faces of any villain he can hit. He is helping Cap anyway he can. Peter Parker is not giving up.
In the far background, no one even has time to react to the explosion of rubble and steel 100 feet behind them as the Sentry is launching himself and Carnage...
**SPX:** boom

**9-** Ext. Raft- Same
Wide profile of the Raft. The Sentry is a golden beam of energy that is thrusting into the night sky in a perfect line, straight for the heavens.
In the far background, Manhattan is still in a blackout.

**BENDIS:** "Like you see in the script, I did have a pretty clear idea about this Carnage/Sentry scene. David made a decision that 90 percent of the time I would go with, to pace it a little more evenly and go for the cinematic quality of it. But I think it was hard to describe, and I kind of switched gears on him halfway through the first issue. It became about iconic, horror, shocking images rather than cinematic storytelling. He was all in the cinematic zone and I kinda switched gears on him. There's nothing wrong with what he did—it was just two different ideas. I ended up having [colorist] Frank D'Armata go back and twiddle around with the pages a little bit. Clearly I didn't describe my original idea well enough."

**FINCH:** "I mean, it's not too often that things get changed. And it's not too often that I ever change the script. If I ever do, we're always pretty much on the same page, generally. I really try not to change things in a way that would change the intent. With this one, I kinda did. Bendis normally still would let it go, but that was the most important scene in the book, and I didn't really approach it that way. I think it works much better than if we had done it my way."

**BENDIS:** "I thought that the tactile image of the Sentry ripping Carnage in half was the seller, you know what I mean? So when David changed it, I came back to him and said, 'The beat that's really missing is the big-ass ripping-Carnage-in-half shot. That's the thing that's gonna make people go, "Get out of here! You don't see that every day!"' A lot of the time I find a way to make a change work, but in that instance I just said, 'This is, for a lot of people, the Sentry's introduction, so let's really sell this moment.' If you f---in' hate the book, at least you can say, 'Hey, I saw Carnage get ripped in half.'"

**FINCH:** "I really wanted to make the panel where Carnage gets ripped in half almost blasé, like this is the kind of thing the Sentry could do every day. I had two more panels of him flying into space, and the panel where he tears Carnage in half was much smaller on the page, and I had a panel of blood flying by his face, and then he turns and looks down at Earth below. I got across the kind of mood I wanted on the page, but it was really not what Bendis was trying to get across at all. Looking at it, when you read the actual story, it was a good call to fix it."

**PAGE 4-**

**1-** Ext. Space/earth's orbit- Same
Sentry, draped in golden energy, has flown the crazed, flailing figure of Carnage into %^@&ing orbit.
He does it with determination and style, but his face is pursed with self doubt and neurosis.
But in one %^@&ing panel we see just how powerful the Sentry is. Marvel has their superman.
The earth in the distance. A smattering of cable satellites dancing in orbit.
(Technically, this is a bit over the top, but we are essentially expressing how this character is playing by a different set of physical rules then the others)

**2-** Sentry takes a good section of Carnage's pliable body in each hand and rips him in half.
The Sentry is ending this quickly and finally. Carnage's face is silent screaming in horror at this violent finality.
Sentry does do this with effort. But he does it.

**3-** Sentry tosses Carnage's ruined body aside like its nothing but garbage and looks back down to earth.

# SAMPLESCRIPTS

**PAGE 5-**

**1-** Int. The Raft- Same
Luke Cage has pulled off the Sentry's thick stone and metal prison cell door and smacks it right into the back of Mr. Hyde's head.
Matt diving out of the way.
Jessica Drew is stepping over the rubble on the floor and is pointing to the big hole in the ceiling. Some moonlight pouring in. A beam of hope.
There is water on the ground now.
**LUKE CAGE**
Ok, now we're talkin'!
**SPX:** Smash!!
**MISTER HYDE**
Aaargh!
**LUKE CAGE**
Arms, legs, and a big %^@&ing mouth... you I can handle!
**JESSICA DREW**
At least now we have a way out.

**2-** Spider-Woman is grabbing an amazed Foggy by the arm with one hand and the surviving S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent with the other. She is getting ready to take off. Foggy notices the growing water on the ground. It's up to their ankles all of a sudden.
**JESSICA DREW**
Mr. Nelson, hold on, I can fly a little, I'm going to get you-
**FOGGY NELSON**
A little?
**JESSICA DREW**
Little bit. Might take a couple of tries.
**FOGGY NELSON**
Where's the water coming from? Are we sinking?
**HYDRO-MAN**
(off panel) No!

**3-** From behind Luke and Matt, the huge figure of Hydro-Man steps out of his open cell and starts to bubble into a tidal wave.
**HYDRO-MAN**
But you are drowning.

**4-** BLACK AND WHITE ZOOM SHOT! Same but tight black and white zoom shot. Hydro-Man snarls like Elvis. He owns the room.
Type reads:
Name: Morris "Morrie" Bench
Alias: Hydro-Man
Biological liquid transformation

**5-** BACK TO COLOR! Slightly low looking up. Luke and Matt's tired mouths both drop. This is bad.
**LUKE CAGE**
Aw Crap...

**BENDIS:** "The cool thing about the issue was me and [editor] Tom Brevoort digging up all the names of the characters that would be in the Raft, and finding, like, 40 names of supervillains who are all great villains, but just haven't seen the light of day in a few years. Hydro-Man was funny, because I was just trying to do a pile-on. We made a list of all these villains, and I looked down the list and went, 'Okay, we got Mr. Hyde, we got Carnage—who would be the worst one that you could have when you're in the sub-basement of a floating prison? Hey, Hydro-Man!'"

**FINCH:** "There was no pressure with this fight stuff. I feel comfortable drawing that kind of thing. I don't feel comfortable drawing people standing around page after page talking to each other. That's when I worry, that's when I think, 'Okay, people are just gonna completely not care and walk away.' When I read the scripts, I love it, because Bendis's dialogue is so great, and you care about the characters. But when I'm drawing it, it's easy to kind of get a little distance from that, and I don't feel comfortable drawing that stuff anywhere near as much as I feel comfortable drawing people hitting each other. Storytelling-type stuff—I try to work on that, but it's always been more of a struggle for me."

**BENDIS:** "If anything, I would have had it more like a typhoon inside, but David did it kind of like that slow-rising 'uh-oh.' His version was pretty scary too. I said, 'F—in' shrink the ceilings and close in the walls.' You can never go wrong with it and it really amps things up. Also, you'll notice Daredevil is appropriately freaked out. That's a subliminal trick: You've got the Man Without Fear, and even though he's not yelling 'Oh, I'm afraid," he's looking terrified. And that kinda gets the reader to go, 'Oh, sh—! If the Man Without Fear's scared...'"

**FINCH:** "This was a challenge. Drawing Hydro-Man initially was pretty easy, but how the water would fill up the room and affect the heroes was something that I wasn't sure about. Fortunately, I remembered that in 1990 or 1991, Marc Silvestri drew a sequence with Wolverine in the sewers of New York with all kinds of flooding and everything, so I just opened up that stuff and swiped. [*Laughs*]"

**PAGE 6-**

**1-** Wide of the corridor. This furious angry wave takes Luke Cage, Mister Hyde, Jessica, Foggy, the two S.H.I.E.L.D. Agents and everyone off their feet. The entire tunnel is flooded.
**SPX** : whoooosshh
**FOGGY NELSON**
Aaggh!

**2-** Small panel. Jessica is under the swirling water, wide eyed. This isn't good at all. This is terrifying.

**3-** Small panel. Jessica grabs Foggy's limp body underwater.

**4-** Big panel. High looking down. Jessica has re-grabbed Foggy with one hand and the S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent with the other, and she is flying right towards us right out the hole the Sentry made in his spectacular escape.
She has Foggy by the back of his collar and the agent by the arm. The waves of water nipping at her heels- helping her fly actually. The wind at her back.
She is pushing herself as hard as she can. She is giving it everything, gritted teeth.
In the background, we see Matt and Luke fighting the waves and being pushed right up and out the top along with the spiraling water.
Everyone is being carried out with Hydro-Man's escape.

**5-** Int. Raft main corridor- same
Luke, Matt, Jessica and Foggy burst through the hole with a thousand gallons of Hydro-Man. They make it to the ground to everyone surprise, the rushing water knocks a few of the escaping and fighting villains off their feet
Giving Spidey and Cap, in the foreground, a minute to breathe. The unconscious Mr. Hyde also deadflops onto the new floor.
It's a burst of water and even more chaos than there was already.
**SPX:** foosshh

**6-** Tight on Spidey and Cap, both very worse for wear. They are both stunned to see the other heroes.

**PAGES 7 & 8**

**1**- Huge panel across both pages. The NEW AVENGERS are together- mostly!
From over Cap's fighting shoulder, wide of the room. The water is whooshing straight out of the hole in the ceiling, Hydro-Man is escaping and taking a couple of his pals with him. But Matt Murdock, Luke Cage and Jessica Drew dive right into the fight with everything they have.
Spidey is holding his broken arm and kicking Barbadus in the back of the head.
Matt Murdock, shirtless, high split kicks taking a couple of the Wrecking Crew in the neck with great karate.
Jessica Drew is stinging the %^@& out of The Crusader.
Luke Cage is fighting by using Mister Hyde's unconscious body as a battering ram and taking out three villains at a time.
Even though everyone is dirty and out of costume and hurt and wet and bloody, there is a real sense that the tables have turned.
There's a real sense of excitement in the chaos. Desperation having turned to thrill.
The handful of armed S.H.I.E.L.D Agents are helping to. Some grabbing Foggy and protecting him.
But all the while any villain that can fly or jump is crawling out of this and making a getaway. We imagine that of the 87 villains that at least fifty are or have escaped through the madness.

**SPIDER-MAN**
Matt Murdock? What the hell are you doing here?

**MATT MURDOCK**
You doing ok?

**SPIDER-MAN**
How do I look?

**MATT MURDOCK**
You dropped your mask.

**SPIDER-MAN**
Yeah.

**MATT MURDOCK**
Not a great career move!

**JESSICA DREW**
Captain America?? Not that I'm not thrilled to see you!

**LUKE CAGE**
I ain't thrilled about any of this!

**2**- Captain America is punching Foolkiller unconscious as his shield swings behind him and clocks Dr. Demonicus before Dr. Demonicus can jump on Cap.
In the foreground, Spidey in a lot of pain, thwips a web off panel.

**CAPTAIN AMERICA**
Does anyone know how this started?

**SPIDER-MAN**
No, but you can blame me if you want, everyone else will.

**SPX:** THWIP

**3**- Captain America leans around to catch his shield but that leaves him open for the Wrecker to grab Cap by the neck.

**CAPTAIN AMERICA**
Doesn't matter, we need to contain this and keep as many as we can from escaping! This is already a disaargh!

**4**- Low looking up. The Wrecker tosses Cap, with shield, up in the air with all his might and launches him straight out of one of the giant holes in the ceiling. Cap is heading for the roof head first.
Spidey and the others are shocked to see Cap taken out and instantly seem unfocused.
Other villains are also flying or crawling out of the hole, while others fight.

**WRECKER**
Ha!

**SPIDER-MAN**
Cap!

**5**- Ext. Raft- night
Cap is flying out of the Raft as a couple of villains fly by. Cap is about to arc back down and land on the roof of the Raft hard when....

**6**- Red metal gloves catch him under the arms. Cap is surprised to be saved. He looks up to see who it is that caught him.

**IRON MAN**
Hey Steve...

**BENDIS:** This is the first time you see this new group of the Avengers all on the same page. The idea is to have them all in one panel, all fighting for everything there is to fight for. There's kind of a subliminal promise to the reader, when there's one half fighting on the bottom level through most of the issue and the other half on top, that they're gonna meet eventually, and here they are meeting. You want it to look like as soon as they get together, something clicks. For a lot of the characters, it's that as soon as they see Captain America, they go 'phew!' and get a second wind. For the reader, it's 'Look at this group!' It's my job, having torn the Avengers in half, to sell this idea that's been in my head, when I'm putting them back together—this image of this group, connected in a fight."

**FINCH:** I didn't know what to do with this at all, really. Sometimes Bendis asks for so much stuff! [*Laughs*] And I don't think he realizes how it's going to look on the page with so much stuff going on. But that was definitely a place where he asked for a lot of stuff, and I really, really tried to get as much of it in as I could. I think I managed to get almost everything in there, actually. I don't normally do little layouts, but since I didn't know how I'd handle this, I did for this one. I knew I wanted to have the main fight going on in the foreground of the panel, and in the background have Foggy surrounded by S.H.I.E.L.D. agents like it says in the script. I planned it out by putting Foggy really small to the right, adding a horizon line, putting Captain America big to the left. I drew 'em both in pretty tight, and then basically drew everything else. The other thing that I did that really helped me was that I drew all the heroes first, because they're the most important and they're the figures that I don't want covered and obscured. Once they were all in there, I drew in the villains around them, so I could make sure they didn't cover the heroes. I didn't end up drawing myself into a corner. That panel took a long time. Maybe I could have skimped a few things! [*Laughs*]"

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*Brian Michael Bendis is the one-man writing machine behind* Ultimate Spider-Man, The New Avengers, Daredevil, The Pulse *and* Powers. *Mark Bagley has swung with Spider-Man for years, first on* Amazing *and then on* Ultimate. *David Finch cut his teeth on Top Cow's* Witchblade *and* Aphrodite IX *before heading to Marvel for* Ultimate X-Men *and* New Avengers.

# BREAKING IN

BY SEAN T. COLLINS

"I can't do this anymore!"

That's what future *Superman/Batman* artist Ed McGuinness said after two weeks in community college. Bitten by the comics bug, he knew he had to become a professional artist—or die trying. "It's that dedication, that determination, that you need," McGuinness says. "You gotta be married to your comics."

So what to do after the honeymoon is over? We've asked some of the industry's top talents for their advice on everything you need in order to break into the comic book biz. From assembling a killer portfolio, to networking at conventions, to dealing with editors and publishers, to avoiding the dreaded siren song of that PlayStation 2, it's all here. With a little luck, a lot of determination and the tips you'll find below, who knows—we may be asking *you* for advice in *The Best of Basic Training Volume 2*!

## SETITUP

Even if you have skills that'd put Michelangelo to shame, it's not going to be easy getting your foot into the door of your favorite publishing house. With a thousand others vying for the same job as you, it all comes down to discipline, good habits and a strong work ethic. Newcomers to the industry often fall victim to the same pitfalls and problems, leaving the sadder but wiser old-timers shaking their heads ruefully about what might have been. "A lot of times guys will run off of raw talent but end up not doing anything with it," says McGuinness of these coulda-been contenders. "Selfishly, I get mad at those guys, because I want to see more of their stuff!"

If you're looking to take a preemptive strike against laziness and lateness, *Green Lantern: Rebirth* artist Ethan Van Sciver has one simple bit of advice for you: "Don't buy a videogame console. You might as well acquire a drug habit. Both would be equally destructive to your goal of getting pages done on time. It's that severe!" Okay, so maybe he's exaggerating a little, but even if *Halo* isn't heroin, it's paramount that you make your art your first priority, even when you're just starting out.

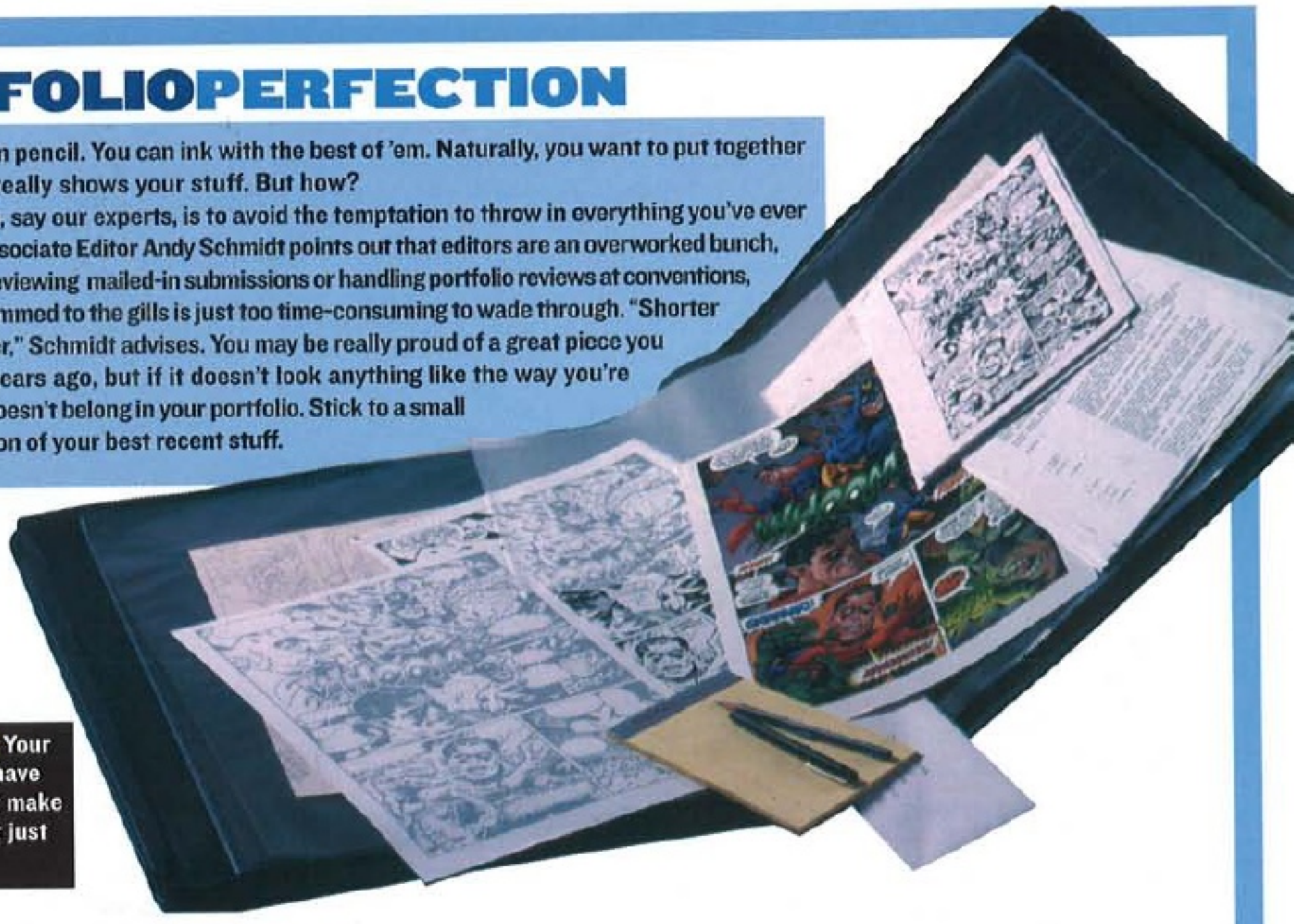
**DRAW TILL YOU DROP** Get used to putting in long hours honing your craft if you want to make your move in the comic business.

PAINTED PAUL ROBERTSON, THE INCREDIBLE HULK™ & © 2003 MARVEL CHARACTERS, INC.

# PORTFOLIOPERFECTION

You swing a mean pencil. You can ink with the best of 'em. Naturally, you want to put together a portfolio that really shows your stuff. But how?

The first step, say our experts, is to avoid the temptation to throw in everything you've ever drawn. Marvel Associate Editor Andy Schmidt points out that editors are an overworked bunch, whether they're reviewing mailed-in submissions or handling portfolio reviews at conventions, so a portfolio crammed to the gills is just too time-consuming to wade through. "Shorter is definitely better," Schmidt advises. You may be really proud of a great piece you did in art class years ago, but if it doesn't look anything like the way you're working now, it doesn't belong in your portfolio. Stick to a small but solid collection of your best recent stuff.



**GREATEST HITS** Your portfolio should have your best art, but make sure that art isn't just fancy pinups.

# BACKTOBASICS

And make sure that art highlights your full range as an artist, too, particularly your ability to tell a story in pictures. "Storytelling is a lost art," muses Frank Cho, artist on *Liberty Meadows* and *Shanna, the She-Devil*. "A lot of the newer artists coming in are neglecting it for more flashy stuff. So don't have a portfolio full of pin-ups, or of two guys punching the crap out of each other." Instead, Cho suggests, "Have a conversation piece where people are sitting around talking, then transition it to a walk in the park. Everyday, mundane stuff shows the editors, the writers and the readers that you can tell a story visually."

Samples that display your grasp of the basics are key as well. "Every convention I go to there's usually a dozen or so art students who want to break into the industry," Cho says. "But when I look at their portfolios, their anatomy is non-existent and their perspective is flat. Sure, your portfolio may have some weird, crazy, surrealistic images, but you can't use that in a comic book."

**ASTONISH 'EM** To wow editors, develop a unique style like John Cassaday does on his pinups and sequential panels (right).

# BE YOURSELF

Finally, remember that your portfolio should represent *you*, not your love for the hot artist of the day. "Enjoy your influences," says *Astonishing X-Men* artist John Cassaday (whose work is shown here), "but don't let them rule the roost." *Ex Machina*'s Tony Harris warns, "Stay away from aping someone else. Most of the cats working in comics now have got a really specific look to their stuff, and it's so easy to recognize. You don't want to steal someone's thunder by ripping them off." *Nightcrawler* artist Darick Robertson agrees: "My big mistake early on was that I allowed myself to be influenced by trends rather than following my instincts."

# BREAKINGIN

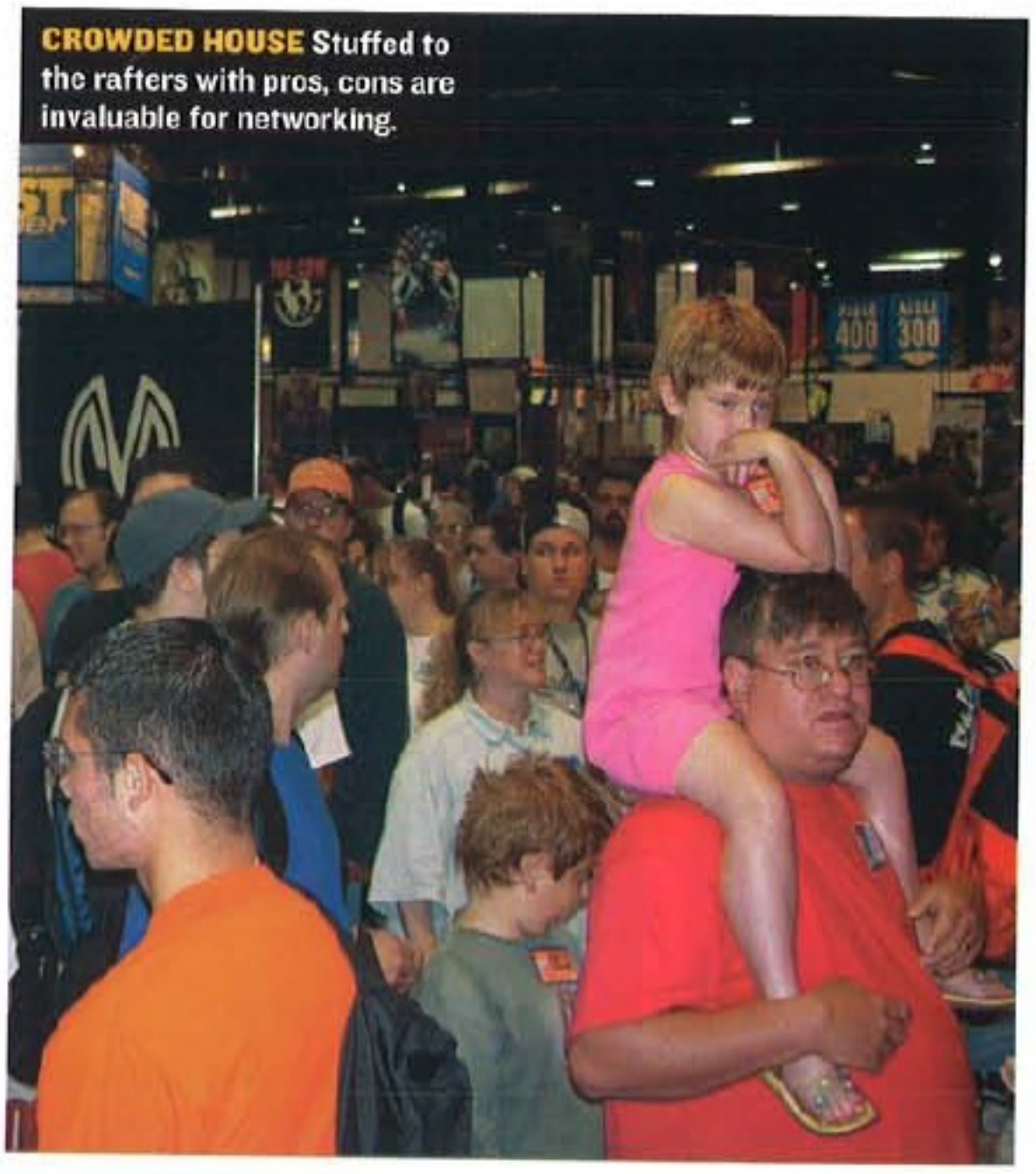
**LISTEN UP!** Feedback from editors at cons will improve your pages—if you pay attention to the suggestions.

## CONWITHTHESHOW

All right, you've assembled a pretty sweet portfolio in which your best work is on display. Now all you need to do is get it in the right hands and in front of the right eyes. The best place to do that, of course, is at a comic book convention, where fans, pros and publishers mix it up more often than the X-Men change outfits.

"I truly think showing your work at a convention is the best way to break in," Cassaday asserts. "It's what I did. More and more, conventions are used as tools in the job of editor to find new talent." Indeed, superstars like Marc Silvestri and Michael Turner landed their first professional gigs at the very first cons they attended.

McGuinness is on the same page when it comes to the personal touch cons provide. "If you can show your portfolio to an editor in person, that's an extra mile that you can't run by e-mail," he says. "You could be the best artist around, but if you're the best guy in an inbox of 100 other submissions, it's probably not going to get seen. But if you're the best guy on line at a convention, you could be the ray of light for that editor on that day, and he's just gonna say 'Wow!'—because you're right there."



**CROWDED HOUSE** Stuffed to the rafters with pros, cons are invaluable for networking.

## MEETANDGREET

*Ultimate Secret* artist Steve McNiven preaches the power of cons because of the feedback they can provide. "Go to conventions and show your work to as many people as you can," he says, including editors and any professional artists in attendance. "Get advice, follow through on it and come back next year," McNiven advises. Persistence can pay off.

It also helps to talk to the right people, so while you're there, don't forget to make nice with comics' great gatekeepers, the Assistant Editors. "Your assistant editor is the person you should be kindest to," insists Robertson. "They have the hardest job and will deal with you more than you deal with an editor. The better you treat them, the easier your job will be. Plus, today's assistant editor is tomorrow's full editor!"

No matter who you shake hands with, remember you can make an impression just by being polite and professional. "Have you **SEEN** your average comic book artist lately?" jokes cover artist extraordinaire Greg Horn, who says that behaving in a businesslike manner can give you a leg up on the competition and impress the pros you meet. "Be polite, you know?" adds Schmidt.

## INTERNALAFFAIRS

The hubbub of a convention isn't the only way to get your name—and art—in front of the right people. There are many tried-and-true ways to pay your dues in the industry before getting that big break from the Big Two.

One of these is interning at a comics publisher or artist's studio. "If you're lucky enough to become familiar with someone who's a pro, or if you intern with a studio, that's the route to take," says artist Tony Harris. "You're gonna benefit from their experience and their knowledge. It's easier to eventually make the segue into getting your own work." Most publishers and studios post information regarding internship possibilities on their websites. Check 'em out, learn what they're looking for, follow their guidelines, send in your resume and don't be afraid to follow up (politely, of course) if you don't hear back right away.

## INDEPENDENTS'DAY

If you're ready to be published right now, though, try the independent comics circuit. Companies like Oni, Slave Labor and Top Shelf are always on the hunt for fresh new voices, many of whom eventually go on to mainstream superstardom like Joe Linsner did with *Dawn* (pictured right). "Work in the independent market, for as long as it takes," says Ethan Van Sciver. "The small press is like playing in your garage when you're in a band, and it requires the same diligence." Submission guidelines are usually found on company websites, so learn what they want—if they're after already-finished offbeat black-and-white autobio comics, your epic sci-fi series pitch probably won't make the cut. Finally, the Internet presents a variety of affordable self-publishing options.

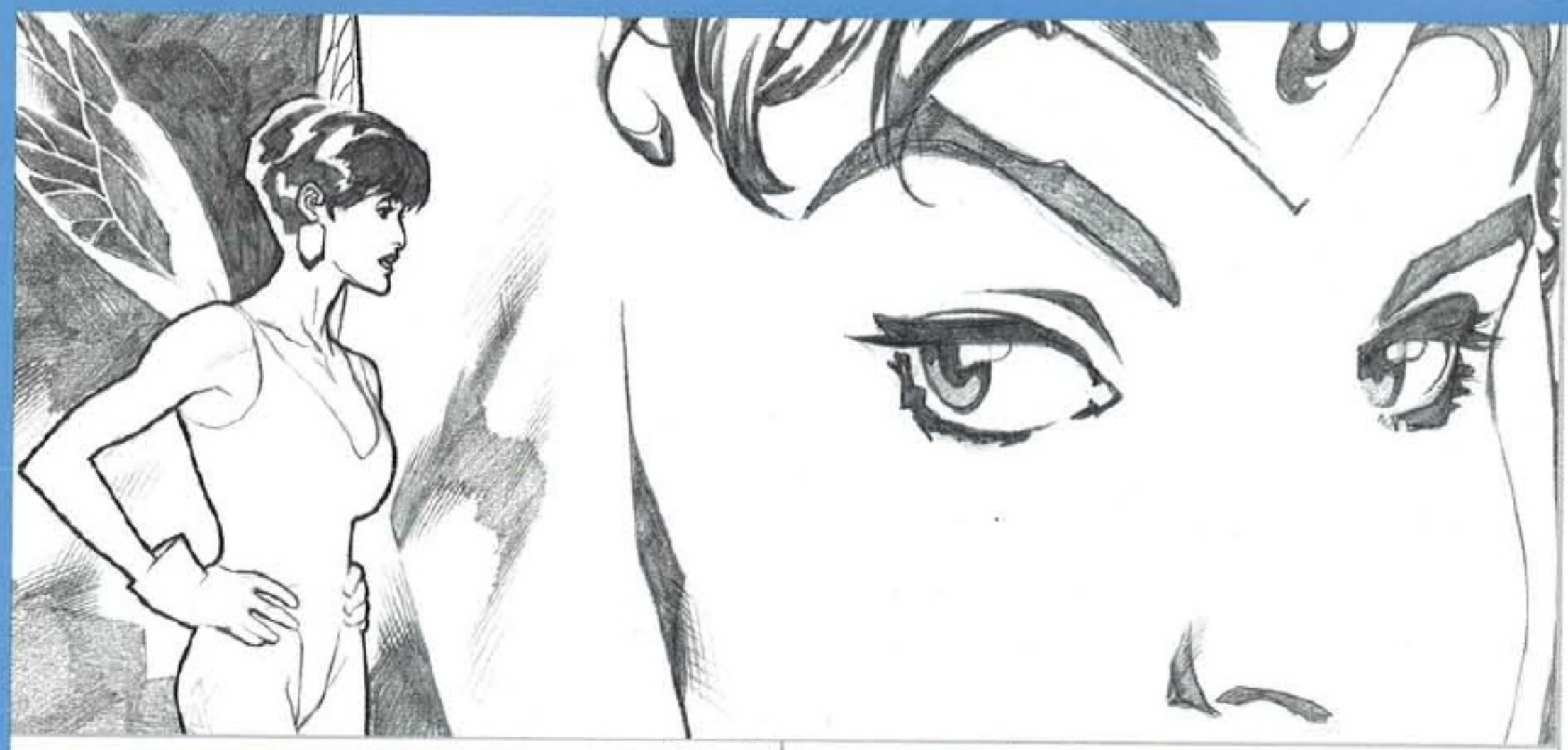
**FIRST LIGHT** Joe Linsner's *Dawn* won him industry kudos.

**DRAWN TO STARDOM** With a little talent and a lot of perseverance, a comic career could be yours.

## SUCCESS!

Trying to break in can be long and frustrating, but a career in this incredible medium is well worth the effort. "Be positive about doing this," Cassaday encourages. "Telling stories and getting paid to do it is as fine of a thing as you could do. There's little else you could ask for in a profession." And the moment you land that internship, get that great portfolio review or publish your first small-press book, you'll realize it, too. "Just think," says Horn, "everytime you feel like giving up, a whole mess of other artists also considered...and gave up. So all you have to do is hang in there, and sooner or later, while everyone else is quitting, you'll rise to the top!"

# INDEX




## A

Action scenes .....97
Adams, Art .....127
Aliens .....179
Allred, Mike .....76, 105
Anatomy .....30, 31, 76, 81, 97
Anime .....58
Armor .....131, 183
Art direction .....201
Assistant editors .....252

## B

Backgrounds .....119
Bagley, Mark .....125, 225, **242**
Balloons .....141
Bendis, Brian Michael .....**242**
Blacks .....167, 211, 215, 219, 235
Block construction .....13, 31, 43
Body language .....46, 63, 81
Breaking in .....250
Breyfogle, Norm .....150
Bristol board .....9, 206
Brushes .....7, 206, 229, 230, 235

## C

Calafiore, Jim .....12, 18, 22, 123, 131, 155, 159, 197, 215
Cassaday, John .....8, 227, 251, 252, 253
Character sheet .....174
Characters .....170
Chen, Sean .....136
Chiaroscuro .....222
Children .....70
Cho, Frank .....201
Clothes .....228
Collaboration .....105, 242
Coloring .....33, 205, 223, **238**
Conventions .....252
Covers .....33, **201**, 218, 227
Creating characters .....170
Criticism .....47
Crosshatching .....28, 207

## D

Deadlines .....201, 227
Dodson, Terry .....152

## E

Energy effects .....187
Erasers .....9,144, 210
Eyes .....41, 56, 59, 68

## F

Faces .....39, 65, 72, 75, 243
Feet .....50
Figure construction .....12
Finch, David .....242
Flight .....103, 166
Foreshortening .....17, **89**
Frames .....212, 226, 243
Frank, Gary .....**43**
French curve .....195

## G

Gerhard .....146
Group shots .....164, 249
Grummett, Tom .....70

## H

Hair .....60
Haley, Matt .....81, **89**
Hands .....**43**, 56, 216
Hanna, Scott .....**232**
Harris, Tony .....148, 216, 251, 253

**Heads** ..... 13, **35**, 72, 75, 77
**Horn, Greg** ..... 119, 182, **219**, 252, 253
**Horror** ..... **175**, **228**
**Hughes, Adam** ..... **58**
**Humor** ..... 202

## I

**Independent comics** ..... 253
**Ink** ..... **8**, 206, 207
**Inking** ..... 102, 205, **206**, **211**, 229, 235
**Internships** ..... 253

## J

**Jimenez, Phil** ..... 103, 119, 187
**Jones, Kelley** ..... **228**

## K

**Keown, Dale** ..... **76**
**Kubert, Joe** ..... 109, 140, 170, 206

## L

**Land, Greg** ..... **114**
**Layout** ..... 54, 145, **148**, **152**, 155, 159, 232
**Lee, Jim** ..... 47, 97, 133
**Lee, Pat** ..... **182**
**Legs** ..... **47**
**Lichtner, Christian** ..... **238**
**Lieber, Steve** ..... **211**
**Linsner, Joseph Michael** ..... **54**, 253
**Lips** ..... 56, 60, 68
**Liquid! Graphics** ..... **238**
**Lusen, Aron** ..... **238**

## M

**Maguire, Kevin** ..... 31, 35, 39
**Mahnke, Doug** ..... **175**
**Maleev, Alex** ..... 58, 221
**Mannequins** ..... 90
**McGuinness, Ed** ..... 250, 252
**McNiven, Steve** ..... 7, 9, 130, 252
**Mecha** ..... **182**
**Metallic surfaces** ..... **127**, 131
**Mignola, Mike** ..... **91**
**Millar, Mark** ..... **152**
**Monsters** ..... **175**
**Mood** ..... 126, 162, 213, **228**
**Moore, Terry** ..... **62**
**Morales, Rags** ..... 197, 228
**Morgue file** ..... 181
**Movement and motion** ..... **85**, **93**
**Muscles** ..... 15, 38, 47, 125

## N

**Negative space** ..... **219**, 226
**Nguyen, Tom** ..... 7, 8
**Nibs** ..... **8**, 206

## P

**Pacing** ..... 126, 159
**Page layout** ..... 126, 143, 145, **148**, **152**, 155, 159, **232**
**Panel layout** ..... 142, 145, **152**, 155, 159, 232
**Pencil types** ..... **7**, 141, 144
**Pens** ..... **8**, 195, 205, 206, 231, 235
**Pérez, George** ..... **164**
**Perspective** ..... **16**, **18**, **22**, 87
**Photo reference** ..... 62, **114**, 120, 125, 136, 148, 187, 243
**Portfolios** ..... 251
**Poses** ..... 61, **81**, 90, 164, 197, 201
**Proportions** ..... 12, 31, 70, 71, 74, **76**, 170

## Q

**Quesada, Joe** ..... 4, 33, 218

## R

**Raney, Tom** ..... **232**
**Reference** ..... 10, 91, **109**, **114**, 137, 146, 148
**Risso, Eduardo** ..... 102, **224**
**Robertson, Darick** ..... 50, 62, 135, 251, 252
**Robots** ..... **182**
**Romita, John Sr.** ..... 10, 13, 69, 95
**Roughs** ..... 141, 233
**Rulers** ..... 144, 195

## S

**Schmidt, Andy** ..... 251, 252
**Scripts** ..... 140, 148, 152, 159, **242**
**Sears, Bart** ..... **16**, **47**, **85**
**Self-publishing** ..... 76, 253
**Settings** ..... **123**
**Sex appeal** ..... 54, **58**, **66**
**Shading** ..... **26**, 131
**Shadows** ..... 20, 215
**Silhouettes** ..... **224**
**Simonson, Walt** ..... **191**
**Sketchbooks** ..... **171**
**Sketching grip** ..... **82**
**Small press** ..... **253**
**Sound effects** ..... **191**
**Speed lines** ..... **93**
**Splash pages** ..... 164, 184, **197**, 232
**Spotting blacks** ..... 211, 220, 233, 243
**Stipple** ..... 207
**Storytelling** ..... **95**, **139**, **140**, **145**, 150, 251
**Structure** ..... **31**, 130
**Style** ..... 17, 69

## T

**Tangencies** ..... 214, 220
**Teens** ..... **70**
**Tension** ..... **155**
**Textures** ..... **127**
**Thumbnails** ..... 141, 149, 153, 197, 232
**Tools of the trade** ..... **7**
**Torsos** ..... **35**
**Turner, Michael** ..... **66**

## V

**Van Sciver, Ethan** ..... 17, 234, 250, 253
**Vanishing point** ..... 16, 18, 22
**Vehicles** ..... **135**
**Video games** ..... 250
**Villains** ..... **173**

## W

**Wagner, Martin** ..... **26**
**White-out** ..... **8**, 210, 229
**Wieringo, Mike** ..... **93**, 145
**Women** ..... 38, 54, **58**, **62**, **66**, 84, 173, 201

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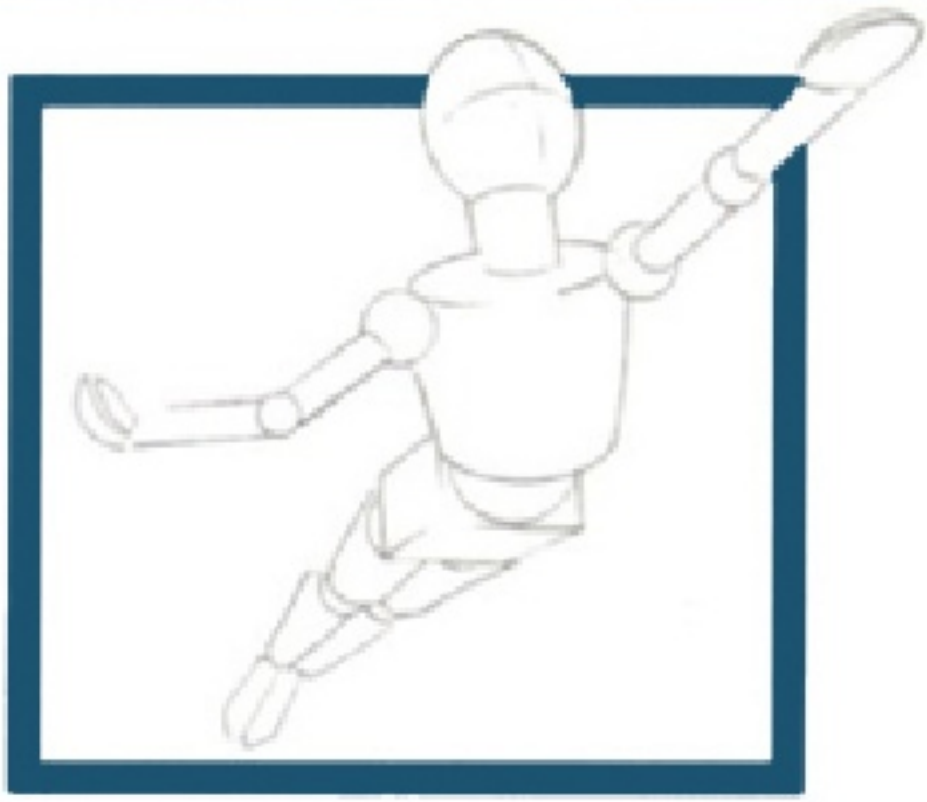

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